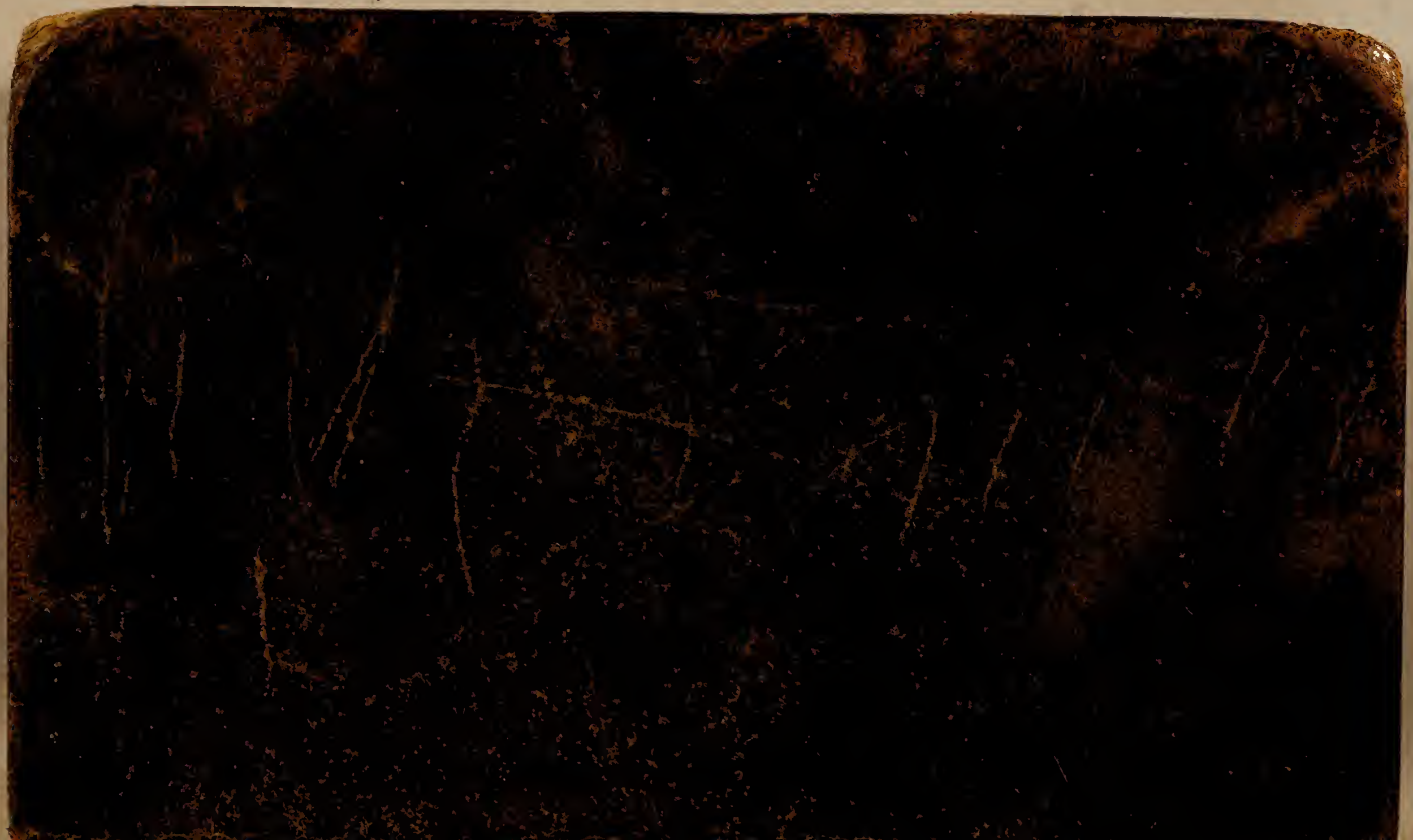

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A

# VIEW

OF THE

# Evidences of Chriſtianity.

## *IN THREE PARTS.*

PART I. Of the direct Hiſtorical Evidence of Chriſtianity, and wherein it is diſtinguiſhed from the Evidence alleged for other Miracles.

PART II. Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Chriſtianity.

PART III. A brief Conſideration of ſome popular Objections.

By WILLIAM PALEY, M. A.
ARCHDEACON OF CARLISLE.

THREE VOLUMES IN ONE.

*BOSTON:*
PRINTED BY MANNING & LORING,
For S. HALL, W. SPOTSWOOD, J. WHITE,
THOMAS & ANDREWS, D. WEST,
E. LARKIN, W. P. BLAKE,
and J. WEST.

1795.

TO THE

HONOURABLE AND RIGHT REVEREND

# JAMES YORK, D. D.

*LORD BISHOP* OF *ELY.*

MY LORD,

WHEN five years ago an important ſtation in the Univerſity of Cambridge awaited your Lordſhip's diſpoſal, you were pleaſed to offer it to me. The circumſtances, under which this offer was made, demand a public acknowledgment. I had never ſeen your Lordſhip: I poſſeſſed no connexion which could poſſibly recommend me to your favour: I was known to you, only by my endeavours, in common with many others, to diſcharge my duty as a tutor in the Univerſity; and by ſome very imperfect, but certainly well intended, and, as you thought, uſeful publications ſince. In an age by no means wanting in examples of honourable patronage, although this deſerve not to be mentioned, in reſpect of the object of your Lordſhip's choice,

it

it is inferior to none, in the purity and diſintereſtedneſs of the motives which ſuggeſted it.

How the following work may be received, I pretend not to foretel. My firſt prayer concerning it is, that it may do good to any: my ſecond hope, that it may aſſiſt, what it hath always been my earneſt wiſh to promote, the religious part of an academical education. If in this latter view it might ſeem in any degree to excuſe your Lordſhip's judgment of its author, I ſhall be gratified by the reflection, that, to a kindneſs flowing from public principles, I have made the beſt public return in my power.

In the mean time, and in every event, I rejoice in the opportunity here afforded me, of teſtifying the ſenſe I entertain of your Lordſhip's conduct, and of a notice which I regard, as the moſt flattering diſtinction of my life.

I am, my Lord,
With ſentiments of gratitude and reſpect,
Your Lordſhip's faithful,
and moſt obliged ſervant,
W. PALEY.

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# *Preparatory Conſiderations.*

I DEEM it unneceſſary to prove that mankind ſtood in need of a revelation, becauſe I have met with no ſerious perſon who thinks that even under the Chriſtian revelation we have too much light, or any aſſurance which is ſuperfluous. I deſire moreover that in judging of Chriſtianity it may be remembered, that the queſtion lies between this religion and none: for if the Chriſtian religion be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will ſupport the pretenſions of any other.

Suppoſe then the world we live in to have had a Creator; ſuppoſe it to appear, from the predominant aim and tendency of the proviſions and contrivances obſervable in the univerſe, that the Deity, when he formed it, conſulted for the happineſs of his ſenſitive creation; ſuppoſe the diſpoſition which dictated this council to continue; ſuppoſe a part of the creation to have received faculties from their Maker, by which they are capable of rendering a moral obedience to his will, and of voluntarily purſuing any end for which he has deſigned them; ſuppoſe the Creator to intend for theſe his rational and accountable agents a ſecond ſtate of exiſtence, in which their ſituation will be regulated by their behaviour in the firſt ſtate, by which ſuppoſition (and by no other) the objection to the divine government in not putting a difference between the good and the bad, and the inconſiſtency of this confuſion with the care and benevolence diſcoverable in the works of the Deity, is done away; ſuppoſe it to be of the utmoſt



importance

importance to the ſubjects of this diſpenſation to know what is intended for them, that is, ſuppoſe the knowledge of it to be highly conducive to the happineſs of the ſpecies, a purpoſe which ſo many proviſions of nature are calculated to promote: Suppoſe, nevertheleſs, almoſt the whole race, either by the imperfection of their faculties, the misfortune of their ſituation, or by the loſs of ſome prior revelation, to want this knowledge, and not to be likely without the aid of a new revelation to attain it; under theſe circumſtances is it improbable that a revelation ſhould be made? Is it incredible that God ſhould interpoſe for ſuch a purpoſe? Suppoſe him to deſign for mankind a future ſtate, is it unlikely that he ſhould acquaint them with it?

Now in what way can a revelation be made but by miracles? In none which we are able to conceive. Conſequently, in whatever degree it is probable or not very improbable that a revelation ſhould be communicated to mankind at all, in the ſame degree is it probable or not very improbable that miracles ſhould be wrought. Therefore when miracles are related to have been wrought in the promulgating of a revelation manifeſtly wanted, and, if true, of ineſtimable value, the improbability which ariſes from the miraculous nature of the things related, is not greater than the original improbability that ſuch a revelation ſhould be imparted by God.

I wiſh it however to be correctly underſtood, in what manner, and to what extent, this argument is alleged. We do not aſſume the attributes of the Deity, or the exiſtence of a future ſtate, in order to *prove* the reality of miracles. That reality always muſt be proved by evidence. We aſſert only that in miracles adduced in ſupport of revelation, there is not any ſuch antecedent improbability as no teſtimony can ſurmount. And, for the purpoſe of maintaining this aſſertion, we contend, that the incredibility of miracles related to have been wrought in atteſtation of a meſſage from God, conveying intelligence of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, and teaching mankind how

to

to prepare themſelves for that ſtate, is not in itſelf greater than the event, call it either probable or improbable, of the two following propoſitions being true, namely, firſt, that a future ſtate of exiſtence ſhould be deſtined by God for his human creation, and ſecondly, that, being ſo deſtined, he ſhould acquaint them with it. It is not neceſſary for our purpoſe that theſe propoſitions be capable of proof, or even that by arguments drawn from the light of nature, they can be made out to be probable. It is enough that we are able to ſay concerning them, that they are not ſo violently improbable, ſo contradictory to what we already believe of the divine power and character, that either the propoſitions themſelves, or facts ſtrictly connected with the propoſitions, (and therefore no farther improbable than they are improbable) ought to be rejected at firſt ſight, and to be rejected by whatever ſtrength or complication of evidence they be atteſted.

This is the prejudication we would reſiſt. For to this length does a modern objection to miracles go, viz. that no human teſtimony can in any caſe render them credible. I think the reflection above ſtated, that, if there be a revelation, there muſt be miracles; and that, under the circumſtances in which the human ſpecies are placed, a revelation is not improbable, or not improbable in any great degree, to be a fair anſwer to the whole objection.

But ſince it is an objection which ſtands in the very threſhold of our argument, and, if admitted, is a bar to every proof, and to all future reaſoning upon the ſubject, it may be neceſſary, before we proceed farther, to examine the principle upon which it profeſſes to be founded: which principle is conciſely this, that it is contrary to experience that a miracle ſhould be true, but not contrary to experience that teſtimony ſhould be falſe.

Now there appears a ſmall ambiguity in the term "experience," and in the phraſes "contrary to experience," or "contradicting experience," which it may be neceſſary to remove in the firſt place. Strictly ſpeaking,

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the narrative of a fact is *then* only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place we being present, did not perceive it to exist; as if it should be asserted, that in a particular room, and at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead, in which room, and at the time specified, we being present and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place. Here the assertion is contrary to experience properly so called; and this is a contrariety which no evidence can surmount. It matters nothing, whether the fact be of a miraculous nature or not. But although this be the experience, and the contrariety, which Archbp. Tillotson alleged in the quotation with which Mr. Hume opens his essay, it is certainly not that experience, nor that contrariety, which Mr. Hume himself intended to object. And, short of this, I know no intelligible signification which can be affixed to the term "contrary to experience," but one, viz. that of not having ourselves experienced any thing similar to the thing related, or such things not being generally experienced by others. I say not "generally," for to state, concerning the fact in question, that no such thing was *ever* experienced, or that *universal* experience is against it, is to assume the subject of the controversy.

Now the improbability which arises from the want (for this properly is a want, not a contradiction) of experience, is only equal to the probability there is, that if the thing were true, we should experience things similar to it, or that such things would be generally experienced. Suppose it then to be true that miracles were wrought upon the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority, is it certain that such miracles would be repeated so often, and in so many places, as to become objects of general experience? Is it a probability approaching to certainty? Is it a probability of any great strength or force? Is it such as no evidence can encounter? and yet this probability is the exact converse, and therefore the exact measure of the improbability

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which ariſes from the want of experience, and which Mr. Hume repreſents as invincible by human teſtimony.

It is not like alleging a new law of nature, or a new experiment in natural philoſophy, becauſe, when theſe are related, it is expected that, under the ſame circumſtances, the ſame effect will follow univerſally; and in proportion as this expectation is juſtly entertained, the want of a correſponding experience negatives the hiſtory. But to expect concerning a miracle that it ſhould ſucceed upon repetition, is to expect that which would make it ceaſe to be a miracle, which is contrary to its nature as ſuch, and would totally deſtroy the uſe and purpoſe for which it was wrought.

The force of experience as an objection to miracles is founded in the preſumption, either that the courſe of nature is invariable, or that, if it be ever varied, variations will be frequent and general. Has the neceſſity of this alternative been demonſtrated? Permit us to call the courſe of nature the agency of an intelligent being, and is there any good reaſon for judging this ſtate of the caſe to be probable? Ought we not rather to expect, that ſuch a Being, upon occaſions of peculiar importance, may interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that ſuch occaſions ſhould return ſeldom; that theſe interruptions conſequently ſhould be confined to the experience of a few; that the want of it, therefore, in many, ſhould be matter neither of ſurpriſe nor objection?

But as a continuation of the argument from experience it is ſaid, that, when we advance accounts of miracles, we aſſign effects without cauſes, or we attribute effects to cauſes inadequate to the purpoſe, or to cauſes of the operation of which we have no experience. Of what cauſes, we may aſk, and of what effects does the objection ſpeak? If it be anſwered that, when we aſcribe the cure of the palſy to a touch, of blindneſs to the anointing of the eyes with clay, or the raiſing of the dead to a word, we lay ourſelves open to this imputation, we reply that we aſcribe no ſuch effects to ſuch cauſes. We perceive no virtue or energy in theſe things more than in other things

of the ſame kind. They are merely ſigns to connect the miracle with its end. The effect we aſcribe ſimply to the volition of the Deity; of whoſe exiſtence and power, not to ſay of whoſe preſence and agency, we have previous and independent proof. We have therefore all we ſeek for in the works of rational agents, a ſufficient power and an adequate motive. In a word, once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not incredible.

Mr. Hume ſtates the caſe of miracles to be a conteſt of oppoſite improbabilities, that is to ſay, a queſtion whether it be more improbable that the miracle ſhould be true, or the teſtimony falſe; and this I think a fair account of the controverſy. But herein I remark a want of argumentative juſtice, that, in deſcribing the improbability of miracles, he ſuppreſſes all thoſe circumſtances of extenuation which reſult from our knowledge of the exiſtence, power, and diſpoſition of the Deity, his concern in the creation, the end anſwered by the miracle, the importance of that end, and its ſubſerviency to the plan purſued in the works of nature. As Mr. Hume has repreſented the queſtion, miracles are alike incredible to him who is previouſly aſſured of the conſtant agency of a Divine Being, and to him who believes that no ſuch being exiſts in the univerſe. They are equally incredible, whether related to have been wrought upon occaſions the moſt deſerving, and for purpoſes the moſt beneficial, or for no aſſignable end whatever, or for an end confeſſedly trifling or pernicious. This ſurely cannot be a correct ſtatement. In adjuſting alſo the other ſide of the balance, the ſtrength and weight of teſtimony, this author has provided an anſwer to every poſſible accumulation of hiſtorical proof by telling us, that we are not obliged to explain how the ſtory or the evidence aroſe. Now I think we *are* obliged; not, perhaps, to ſhew by poſitive accounts how it did, but by a probable hypotheſis how it might ſo happen. The exiſtence of the teſtimony is a phenomenon. The truth of the fact ſolves the phenomenon. If we reject this ſolution, we ought to have ſome other to

reſt

reſt in; and none even by our adverſaries can be admitted, which is not conſiſtent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at preſent, or which makes men *then* to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

But the ſhort conſideration which, independently of every other, convinces me that there is no ſolid foundation in Mr. Hume's concluſion, is the following: When a theorem is propoſed to a mathematician, the firſt thing he does with it is to try it upon a ſimple caſe; and, if it produce a falſe reſult, he is ſure that there muſt be ſome miſtake in the demonſtration. Now to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume's theorem. If twelve men, whoſe probity and good ſenſe I had long known, ſhould ſeriouſly and circumſtantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impoſſible that they ſhould be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, ſhould call theſe men into his preſence, and offer them a ſhort propoſal, either to confeſs the impoſture, or ſubmit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they ſhould refuſe with one voice to acknowledge that there exiſted any falſehood or impoſture in the caſe; if this threat were communicated to them ſeparately, yet with no different effect; if it was at laſt executed; if I myſelf ſaw them, one after another, conſenting to be wracked, burnt, or ſtrangled, rather than give up the truth of their account: ſtill, if Mr. Hume's rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to ſay that there exiſts not a ſceptic in the world who would not believe them; or who would defend ſuch incredulity.

Inſtances of ſpurious miracles ſupported by ſtrong apparent teſtimony undoubtedly demand examination. Mr. Hume has endeavoured to fortify his argument by ſome examples of this kind. I hope in a proper place to ſhow that none of them reach the ſtrength or circumſtances of the Chriſtian evidence. In theſe however conſiſts the weight of his objection. In the principle itſelf I am perſuaded there is none.

# PART THE FIRST.

## Of the direct Historical Evidence of Christianity, and wherein it is distinguished from the Evidence alleged for other Miracles.

THE two propoſitions which I ſhall endeavour to eſtabliſh are theſe:

I. That there is ſatisfactory evidence that many, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.

II. That there is *not* ſatisfactory evidence that perſons, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of other miracles, in their nature as certain as theſe are, have ever acted in the ſame manner, in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts.

The firſt of theſe propoſitions, as it forms the argument, will ſtand at the head of the following nine chapters.

## CHAP. I.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence that many, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

TO ſupport this propoſition two points are neceſſary to be made out; firſt, that the founder of the inſtitution, his

his aſſociates and immediate followers, acted the part which the propoſition imputes to them: ſecondly, that they did ſo, in atteſtation of the miraculous hiſtory recorded in our ſcriptures, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of this hiſtory.

Before we produce any particular teſtimony to the activity and ſufferings which compoſe the ſubject of our firſt aſſertion, it will be proper to conſider the degree of probability which the aſſertion derives from the *nature of the caſe*, that is, by inferences from thoſe parts of the caſe which, in point of fact, are on all hands acknowledged.

Firſt then, the Chriſtian religion exiſts, and therefore by ſome means or other was eſtabliſhed. Now it either owes the principle of its eſtabliſhment, i. e. its firſt publication, to the activity of the perſon who was the founder of the inſtitution, and of thoſe who were joined with him in the undertaking, or we are driven upon the ſtrange ſuppoſition, that, although they might lie by, others would take it up; although they were quiet and ſilent, other perſons buſied themſelves in the ſucceſs and propagation of their ſtory. This is perfectly incredible. To me it appears little leſs than certain, that, if the firſt announcing of the religion by the founder had not been followed up by the zeal and induſtry of his immediate diſciples, the ſcheme muſt have expired in its birth. Then as to the kind and degree of exertion which was employed, and the mode of life to which theſe perſons ſubmitted, we reaſonably ſuppoſe it to be like that, which we obſerve in all others who voluntarily become miſſionaries of a new faith. Frequent, earneſt and laborious preaching, conſtantly converſing with religious perſons upon religion, a ſequeſtration from the common pleaſures, engagements and varieties of life, and an addiction to one ſerious object, compoſe the habits of ſuch men. I do not ſay that this mode of life is without enjoyment, but I ſay that the enjoyment ſprings from ſincerity. With a conſciouſneſs at the bottom, of hollowneſs and falſehood,

falſehood, the fatigue and reſtraint would become inſupportable. I am apt to believe that very few hypocrites engage in theſe undertakings; or, however, perſiſt in them long. Ordinarily ſpeaking, nothing can overcome the indolence of mankind, the love which is natural to moſt tempers of cheerful ſociety and cheerful ſcenes, or the deſire, which is common to all, of perſonal eaſe and freedom, but conviction.

Secondly, it is alſo highly probable, from the nature of the caſe, that the propagation of the new religion was attended with difficulty and danger. As addreſſed to the Jews it was a ſyſtem, adverſe not only to their habitual opinions, but to thoſe opinions upon which their hopes, their partialities, their pride, their conſolation was founded. This people, with or without reaſon, had worked themſelves into a perſuaſion, that ſome ſignal, and greatly advantageous change, was to be effected in the condition of their country, by the agency of a long-promiſed meſſenger from heaven. The rulers of the Jews, their leading ſect, their prieſthood, had been the authors of this perſuaſion to the common people. So that it was not merely the conjecture of theoretical divines, or the ſecret expectation of a few recluſe devotees, but it was become the popular hope and paſſion, and, like all popular opinions, undoubting, and impatient of contradiction. They clung to this hope under every misfortune of their country, and with more tenacity as their dangers or calamities increaſed. To find, therefore, that expectations ſo gratifying were to be worſe than diſappointed, that they were to end in the diffuſion of a mild unambitious religion, which, inſtead of victories and triumphs, inſtead of exalting their nation and inſtitution above the reſt of the world, was to advance thoſe whom they deſpiſed to an equality with themſelves, in thoſe very points of compariſon in which they moſt valued their own diſtinction, could be no very pleaſing diſcovery to a Jewiſh mind; nor could the meſſengers of ſuch intelligence expect to be well received or eaſily credited. The doctrine was

equally

equally harſh and novel. The extending of the kingdom of God to thoſe who did not conform to the law of Moſes, was a notion that had never before entered into the thoughts of a Jew.

The character of the new inſtitution was, in other reſpects alſo, ungrateful to Jewiſh habits and principles. Their own religion was in a high degree technical. Even the enlightened Jew placed a great deal of ſtreſs upon the ceremonies of his law, ſaw in them a great deal of virtue and efficacy; the groſs and vulgar had ſcarcely any thing elſe; and the hypocritical and oſtentatious magnified them above meaſure, as being the inſtruments of their own reputation and influence. The Chriſtian ſcheme, without formally repealing the Levitical code, lowered its eſtimation extremely. In the place of ſtrictneſs and zeal in performing the obſervances which that code preſcribed, or which tradition had added to it, the new ſect preached up faith, well-regulated affections, inward purity and moral rectitude of diſpoſition, as the true ground, on the part of the worſhipper, of merit and acceptance with God. This, however rational it may appear, or recommending to us at preſent, did not by any means facilitate the plan then. On the contrary, to diſparage thoſe qualities which the higheſt characters in the country valued themſelves moſt upon, was a ſure way of making powerful enemies. As if the fruſtration of the national hope was not enough, the long-eſteemed merit of ritual zeal and punctuality was to be decried, and that by Jews preaching to Jews.

The ruling party at Jeruſalem had juſt before crucified the founder of the religion. That is a fact which will not be diſputed. They therefore who ſtood forth to preach the religion, muſt neceſſarily reproach theſe rulers with an execution, which they could not but repreſent as an unjuſt and cruel murder. This would not render their office more eaſy, or their ſituation more ſafe.

With regard to the interference of the Roman government which was then eſtabliſhed in Judea, I ſhould not expect, that, deſpiſing, as it did, the religion of the country,

try, it would, if left to itſelf, animadvert, either with much vigilance, or much ſeverity, upon the ſchiſms and controverſies which aroſe within it. Yet there was that in Chriſtianity which might eaſily afford a handle of accuſation with a jealous government. The Chriſtians avowed an unqualified obedience to a new maſter. They avowed alſo that he was the perſon who had been foretold to the Jews under the ſuſpected title of king. The ſpiritual nature of this kingdom, the conſiſtency of this obedience with civil ſubjection, were diſtinctions too refined to be entertained by a Roman preſident, who viewed the buſineſs at a great diſtance, or through the medium of very hoſtile repreſentations. Our hiſtories accordingly inform us, that this was the turn which the enemies of Jeſus gave to his character and pretenſions in their remonſtrances with Pontius Pilate. And Juſtin Martyr, about a hundred years afterwards, complains that the ſame miſtake prevailed in his time: "Ye having heard that we are waiting for a kingdom, ſuppoſe, without diſtinguiſhing, that we mean a human kingdom, when in truth we ſpeak of that which is with God."[a] And it was undoubtedly a natural ſource of calumny and miſconſtruction.

The preachers therefore of Chriſtianity had to contend with prejudice, backed by power. They had to come forward to a diſappointed people, to a prieſthood poſſeſſing a conſiderable ſhare of municipal authority, and actuated by ſtrong motives of oppoſition and reſentment; and they had to do this under a foreign government, to whoſe favour they made no pretenſions, and which was conſtantly ſurrounded by their enemies. The well known, becauſe the experienced, fate of reformers, whenever the reformation ſubverts ſome reigning opinion, and does not proceed upon a change already taken place in the ſentiments of a country, will not allow, much leſs lead us, to ſuppoſe, that the firſt propagators of Chriſtianity at Jeruſalem and in Judea, with the difficulties and the enemies which they had to contend with, and entirely deſtitute, as they were, of



[a] Ap. 1me. p. 16. ed. Thirl.

force, authority or protection, could execute their miſſion with perſonal eaſe and ſafety.

Let us next inquire what might reaſonably be expected by the preachers of Chriſtianity when they turned themſelves to the heathen public. Now the firſt thing that ſtrikes us is, that the religion they carried with them was *excluſive*. It denied without reſerve the truth of every article of heathen mythology, the exiſtence of every object of their worſhip. It accepted no compromiſe: it admitted no comprehenſion. It muſt prevail, if it prevailed at all, by the overthrow of every ſtatue, altar and temple in the world. It will not eaſily be credited that a deſign, ſo bold as this was, could in any age be attempted to be carried into execution with impunity.

For it ought to be conſidered, that this was not ſetting forth, or magnifying the character and worſhip of ſome new competitor for a place in the Pantheon, whoſe pretenſions might be diſcuſſed or aſſerted without queſtioning the reality of any others. It was pronouncing all other gods to be falſe, and all other worſhip vain. From the facility with which the Polytheiſm of ancient nations admitted new objects of worſhip into the number of their acknowledged divinities, or the patience with which they might entertain propoſals of this kind, we can argue nothing as to their toleration of a ſyſtem, or of the publiſhers and active propagators of a ſyſtem, which ſwept away the very foundation of the exiſting eſtabliſhment. The one was nothing more than what it would be, in Popiſh countries, to add a ſaint to the calendar; the other was to aboliſh and tread under foot the calendar itſelf.

Secondly, it ought alſo to be conſidered, that this was not the caſe of philoſophers propounding in their books or in their ſchools, doubts concerning the truth of the popular creed, or even avowing their diſbelief of it. Theſe philoſophers did not go about from place to place to collect proſelytes from amongſt the common people; to form in the heart of the country ſocieties profeſſing their tenets; to provide for the order, inſtruction and permanency of

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theſe ſocieties; nor did they enjoin their followers to withdraw themſelves from the public worſhip of the temples, or refuſe a compliance with rites inſtituted by the laws.[a] Theſe things are what the Chriſtians did, and what the philoſophers did not: and in theſe conſiſted the activity and danger of the enterpriſe.

Thirdly, it ought alſo to be conſidered, that this danger proceeded not merely from ſolemn acts and public reſolutions of the ſtate, but from ſudden burſts of violence at particular places, from the licenſe of the populace, the raſhneſs of ſome magiſtrates and the negligence of others, from the influence and inſtigation of intereſted adverſaries, and, in general, from the variety and warmth of opinion which an errand ſo novel and extraordinary could not fail of exciting. I can conceive that the teachers of Chriſtianity might both fear and ſuffer much from theſe cauſes without any general perſecution being denounced againſt them by imperial authority. Some length of time, I ſhould ſuppoſe, might paſs before the vaſt machine of the Roman empire would be put in motion, or its attention be obtained to religious controverſy; but, during that time, a great deal of ill uſage might be endured, by a ſet of friendleſs, unprotected travellers, telling men, whereever they came, that the religion of their anceſtors, the religion in which they had been brought up, the religion of the ſtate and of the magiſtrate, the rites which they frequented, the pomp which they admired, was throughout a ſyſtem of folly and deluſion.

Nor do I think that the teachers of Chriſtianity would find protection in that general diſbelief of the popular theology, which is ſuppoſed to have prevailed amongſt the intelligent part of the heathen public. It is by no means true, that unbelievers are uſually tolerant. They are not diſpoſed

[a] The beſt of the ancient philoſophers, Plato, Cicero and Epictetus, allowed, or rather enjoined men to worſhip the gods of the country, and in the eſtabliſhed form. See paſſages to this purpoſe, collected from their works by Dr. Clarke, Nat. and Rev. Rel. p. 180. Ed. V. Except Socrates, they all thought it wiſer to comply with the laws, than to contend.

diſpoſed (and why ſhould they?) to endanger the preſent ſtate of things, by ſuffering a religion of which they believe nothing, to be diſturbed by another of which they believe as little. They are ready themſelves to conform to any thing; and are, oftentimes, amongſt the foremoſt to procure conformity from others, by any method which they think likely to be efficacious. When was ever a change of religion patronized by infidels? How little, notwithſtanding the reigning ſcepticiſm, and the magnified liberality, of that age, the true principles of toleration were underſtood by the wiſeſt men amongſt them, may be gathered from two eminent and unconteſted examples. The younger Pliny, poliſhed, as he was, by all the literature of that ſoft and elegant period, could gravely pronounce this monſtrous judgment: "Thoſe who perſiſted in declaring themſelves Chriſtians, I ordered to be led away to puniſhment, (i. e. to execution) for I DID NOT DOUBT, *whatever it was that they confeſſed, that contumacy and inflexible obſtinacy ought to be puniſhed.*" His maſter Trajan, a mild and accompliſhed prince, went, nevertheleſs, no farther in his ſentiments of moderation and equity, than what appears in the following reſcript: "The Chriſtians are not to be ſought for, but if any are brought before you, and convicted, they are to be puniſhed." And this direction he gives, after it had been reported to him by his own preſident, that, by the moſt ſtrict examination, nothing could be diſcovered in the principles of theſe perſons, but "a bad and exceſſive ſuperſtition," accompanied, it ſeems, with an oath or mutual federation, "to allow themſelves in no crime or immoral conduct whatever." The truth is, the ancient heathens conſidered religion entirely as an affair of ſtate, as much under the tuition of the magiſtrate as any other part of the police. The religion of that age was not merely allied to the ſtate: it was incorporated into it. Many of its offices were adminiſtered by the magiſtrate. Its titles of pontiffs, augurs, and flamens, were borne by ſenators, conſuls and generals. Without diſcuſſing therefore the truth of the theology, they reſented every affront

put

put upon the eſtabliſhed worſhip, as a direct oppoſition to the authority of government.

Add to which that the religious ſyſtems of thoſe times, however ill ſupported by evidence, had been long eſtabliſhed. The *ancient* religion of a country has always many votaries, and ſometimes not the fewer, becauſe its origin is hidden in remoteneſs and obſcurity. Men have a natural veneration for antiquity, eſpecially in matters of religion. What Tacitus ſays of the Jewiſh, was more applicable to the heathen eſtabliſhment, "hi ritus, quoquo modo inducti, antiquitate defenduntur." It was alſo a ſplendid and ſumptuous worſhip. It had its prieſthood, its endowments, its temples. Statuary painting, architecture, and muſic, contributed their effect to its ornament and magnificence. It abounded in feſtival ſhows and ſolemnities, to which the common people are greatly addicted; and which were of a nature to engage them much more than any thing of that ſort among us. Theſe things would retain great numbers on its ſide by the faſcination of ſpectacle and pomp, as well as intereſt many in its preſervation by the advantage which they drew from it. "It was moreover interwoven," as Mr. Gibbons rightly repreſents it, "with every circumſtance of buſineſs or pleaſure, of public or private life, with all the offices and amuſements of ſociety." Upon the due celebration alſo of its rites, the people were taught to believe, and did believe, that the proſperity of their country in a great meaſure depended.

I am willing to accept the account of the matter which is given by Mr. Gibbons: "The various modes of worſhip which prevailed in the Roman world, were all conſidered by the people as equally true, by the philoſophers as equally falſe, and by the magiſtrate as equally uſeful;" and I would aſk, from which of theſe three claſſes of men, were the Chriſtian miſſionaries to look for protection or impunity. Could they expect it from the people, "whoſe acknowledged confidence in the public religion" they ſubverted from its foundation? from the philoſopher, who,

"conſidering all religions as equally falſe," would of courſe rank theirs amongſt the number, with the addition of regarding them as buſy and troubleſome zealots? or from the magiſtrate, who, ſatisfied with the "utility" of the ſubſiſting religion, would not be likely to countenance a ſpirit of proſelytiſm and innovation; a ſyſtem, which declared war againſt every other, and which, if it prevailed, muſt end in a total rupture of public opinion; an upſtart religion, in a word, which was not content with its own authority, but muſt diſgrace all the ſettled religions of the world? It was not to be imagined that he would endure with patience, that the religion of the emperor and of the ſtate ſhould be calumniated and borne down by a company of ſuperſtitious and deſpicable Jews.

Laſtly; the *nature of the caſe* affords a ſtrong proof, that the original teachers of Chriſtianity, in conſequence of their new profeſſion, entered upon a new and ſingular courſe of life. We may be allowed to preſume, that the inſtitution which they preached to others, they conformed to in their own perſons; becauſe this is no more than what every teacher of a new religion both does, and muſt do, in order to obtain either proſelytes or hearers. The change which this would produce was very conſiderable. It is a change which we do not eaſily eſtimate, becauſe, ourſelves and all about us being habituated to the inſtitution from our infancy, it is what we neither experience nor obſerve. After men became Chriſtians, much of their time was ſpent in prayer and devotion, in religious meetings, in celebrating the euchariſt, in conferences, in exhortations, in preaching, in an affectionate intercourſe with one another, and correſpondence with other ſocieties. Perhaps their mode of life in its form and habit was not very unlike that of the Unitas fratrum, or of modern Methodiſts. Think then what it was to become *ſuch* at Corinth, at Epheſus, at Antioch, or even at Jeruſalem. How new? How alien from all their former habits and ideas, and from thoſe of every body about them? What a revolution there muſt have been of opinions and prejudices

dices to bring the matter to this? We know what the precepts of the religion are; how pure, how benevolent, how diſintereſted a conduct they enjoin; and that this purity and benevolence is extended to the very thoughts and affections. We are not perhaps at liberty to take for granted, that the lives of the preachers of Chriſtianity were as perfect as their leſſons: but we are entitled to contend, that the obſervable part of their behaviour muſt have agreed in a great meaſure with the duties which they taught. There was therefore, which is all that we aſſert, a courſe of life purſued by them, different from that which they before led. And this is of great importance. Men are brought to any thing almoſt ſooner than to change their habit of life, eſpecially, when the change is either inconvenient, or made againſt the force of natural inclination, or with the loſs of accuſtomed indulgencies. "It is the moſt difficult of all things, to convert men from vicious habits to virtuous ones, as every one may judge from what he feels in himſelf, as well as from what he ſees in others."[a] It is almoſt like making men over again.

Left then to myſelf, and without any more information than a knowledge of the exiſtence of the religion, of the general ſtory upon which it is founded, and that no act of power, force, or authority, was concerned in its firſt ſucceſs, I ſhould conclude, from the very nature and exigency of the caſe, that the author of the religion during his life, and his immediate diſciples after his death, *exerted* themſelves in ſpreading and publiſhing the inſtitution throughout the country in which it began, and into which it was firſt carried; that, in the proſecution of this purpoſe, they underwent the labours and troubles, which we obſerve the propagators of new ſects to undergo; that the attempt muſt neceſſarily have alſo been in a high degree dangerous; that from the ſubject of the miſſion, compared with the fixed opinions and predjudices of thoſe to whom the miſſionaries were to addreſs themſelves, they could

[a] Hartley's Eſſ. on Man, p. 190.

could hardly fail of encountering ſtrong and frequent oppoſition; that, by the hand of government, as well as from the ſudden fury and unbridled licenſe of the people, they would oftentimes experience injurious and cruel treatment; that, at any rate, they muſt have always had ſo much to fear for their perſonal ſafety, as to have paſſed their lives in a ſtate of conſtant peril and anxiety; and laſtly, that their mode of life and conduct, viſibly at leaſt, correſponded with the inſtitution which they delivered, and ſo far, was both new and required continual ſelf-denial.

## CHAP. II.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence, that many, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of theſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

AFTER thus conſidering what was likely to happen, we are next to inquire how the tranſaction is repreſented in the ſeveral accounts that have come down to us. And this inquiry is properly preceded by the other, foraſmuch as the reception of theſe accounts may depend in part upon the credibility of what they contain.

The obſcure and diſtant view of Chriſtianity, which ſome of the heathen writers of that age had gained, and which a few paſſages in their remaining works incidentally diſcover to us, offers itſelf to our notice in the firſt place: becauſe, ſo far as this evidence goes, it is the conceſſion of adverſaries; the ſource from which it is drawn is unſuſpected. Under this head a quotation from Tacitus,

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well known to every ſcholar, muſt be inſerted as deſerving of particular attention. The reader will bear in mind that this paſſage was written about ſeventy years after Chriſt's death, and that it relates to tranſactions which took place about thirty years after that event. Speaking of the fire which happened at Rome in the time of Nero, and of the ſuſpicions which were entertained that the emperor himſelf was concerned in cauſing it, the hiſtorian proceeds in his narrative and obſervations thus:

"But neither theſe exertions, nor his largeſſes to the people, nor his offerings to the gods, did away the infamous imputation under which Nero lay, of having ordered the city to be ſet on fire. To put an end therefore to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the moſt cruel puniſhments upon a ſet of people, who were held in abhorrence for their crimes, and called by the vulgar, *Chriſtians*. The founder of that name was Chriſt, who ſuffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious ſuperſtition, thus checked for a while, broke out again; and ſpread, not only over Judea, where the evil originated, but through Rome alſo, whither every thing bad upon earth finds its way, and is practiſed. Some who confeſſed their ſect were firſt ſeized, and afterwards by their information a vaſt multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not ſo much of the crime of burning Rome, as of hatred to mankind. Their ſufferings at their execution were aggravated by inſult and mockery, for ſome were diſguiſed in the ſkins of wild beaſts, and worried to death by dogs—ſome were crucified—and others were wrapt in pitched ſhirts, [a] and ſet on fire when the day cloſed, that they might ſerve as lights to illuminate the night. Nero lent his own gardens for theſe executions; and exhibited at the ſame time a mock Circenſian entertainment, being a ſpectator of the whole in the dreſs of a charioteer ſometimes,

[a] This is rather a paraphraſe, but is juſtified by what the Scholiaſt upon Juvenal ſays—"Nero maleficos homines tedâ et papyro et cerâ ſuperves tiebat, et ſic ad ignem ad moveri jubebat." Lard. Jueſt. et Heath. Teſt. vol. I. p. 359.

times, mingling with the crowd on foot, and ſometimes viewing the ſpectacles from his car. This conduct made the ſufferers pitied; and though they were criminals, and deſerving the ſevereſt puniſhment, yet they were conſidered as ſacrificed, not ſo much out of a regard to the public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man."

Our concern with this paſſage at preſent is only ſo far, as it affords a preſumption in ſupport of the propoſition which we maintain, concerning the activity and ſufferings of the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity. Now, conſidered in this view, it proves three things, 1ſt, that the founder of the inſtitution was put to death; 2dly, that, in the ſame country in which he was put to death, the religion, after a ſhort check, broke out again and ſpread; 3dly, that it ſo ſpread as that, within thirty-four years from the author's death, a very great number of Chriſtians (ingens eorum multitudo) were found at Rome. From which fact, the two following inferences may be fairly drawn; firſt, that, if, in the ſpace of thirty-four years from its commencement, the religion had ſpread throughout Judea, had extended itſelf to Rome, and there had numbered a great multitude of converts, the original teachers and miſſionaries of the inſtitution could not have been idle; 2dly, that when the author of the undertaking was put to death as a malefactor for his attempt, the endeavours of his followers to eſtabliſh his religion, in the ſame country, amongſt the ſame people, and in the ſame age, could not but be attended with danger.

Suetonius, a writer contemporary with Tacitus, deſcribing the tranſactions of the ſame reign, uſes theſe words, "Affectiſupliciis Chriſtiani, genus hominum ſuperſtitionis novæ et maleficæ."[a] "The Chriſtians, a ſet of men, of a new and miſchievous (or magical) ſuperſtition, were puniſhed."

Since it is not mentioned *here* that the burning of the city was the pretence of the puniſhment of the Chriſtians, or that they were the Chriſtians of Rome who alone ſuffered,

[a] Suet. Nero. cap. 16.

ed, it is probable that Suetonius refers to ſome more general perſecution than the ſhort and occaſional one which Tacitus deſcribes.

Juvenal, a writer of the ſame age with the two former, and intending, as it ſhould ſeem, to commemorate the cruelties exerciſed under Nero's government, has the following lines : [a]

" Pone Tigellinum tedâ lucebis in illâ
Quâ ſtantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant,
Et latum mediâ ſulcum [b] deducit arenâ."

" Deſcribe Tigellinus, (a creature of Nero's) and you ſhall ſuffer the ſame puniſhment with thoſe who ſtand burning in their own flame and ſmoak, their head being held up by a ſtake fixed to their chin, till they make a long ſtream of blood and melted ſulphur on the ground."

If this paſſage were conſidered by itſelf, the ſubject of the alluſion might be doubtful ; but when connected with the teſtimony of Suetonius, as to the actual puniſhment of the Chriſtians by Nero ; and with the account given by Tacitus of the *ſpecies* of puniſhment which they were made to undergo ; I think it ſufficiently probable, that theſe were the executions to which the poet refers.

Theſe things, as hath already been obſerved, took place within thirty-one years after Chriſt's death, that is, according to the courſe of nature, in the life-time, probably, of ſome of the apoſtles, and certainly in the life-time of thoſe who were converted by the apoſtles, or who were converted in their time. If then the founder of the religion was put to death in the execution of his deſign ; if the firſt race of converts to the religion, many of them, ſuffered the greateſt extremities for their profeſſion ; it is hardly credible, that thoſe who came *between* the two, who were companions of the author of the inſtitution during his life, and the teachers and propagators of the inſtitution after his death, could go about their undertaking with eaſe and ſafety.

The teſtimony of the younger Pliny belongs to a later period ; for although he was contemporary with Tacitus and

[a] Sat. 1, ver. 155. [b] Forſan " deducis."

and Suetonius, yet his account does not, like theirs, go back to the tranſactions of Nero's reign, but is confined to the affairs of his own time. His celebrated letter to Trajan was written about ſeventy years after Chriſt's death; and the information to be drawn from it, ſo far as it is connected with our argument, relates principally to two points; firſt, to the number of Chriſtians in Bythynia and Pontus, which was ſo conſiderable as to induce the governor of theſe provinces to ſpeak of them in the following terms, "Multi, omnis ætatis, utriuſque ſexûs etiam—neque enim civitates tantum, ſed vicos etiam et agros, ſuperſtitionis iſtius contagio pervagata eſt." "There are many of every age and of both ſexes—nor has the contagion of this ſuperſtition ſeized cities only, but ſmaller towns alſo, and the open country." Great exertions muſt have been uſed by the preachers of Chriſtianity to produce this ſtate of things within this time. Secondly, to a point which hath been already noticed, and which I think of importance to be obſerved, namely, the ſufferings to which Chriſtians were expoſed, *without* any public perſecution being denounced againſt them by ſovereign authority. For, from Pliny's doubt how he was to act, his ſilence concerning any ſubſiſting law upon the ſubject, his requeſting the emperor's reſcript, and the emperor, agreeably to his requeſt, propounding a rule for his direction, without reference to any prior rule, it may be inferred, that there was, at that time, no public edict againſt the Chriſtians in force. Yet from this ſame epiſtle of Pliny it appears "that accuſations, trials and examinations were, and had been, going on againſt them, in the provinces over which he preſided; that ſchedules were delivered by anonymous informers, containing the names of perſons who were ſuſpected of holding or of favouring the religion; that, in conſequence of theſe informations, many had been apprehended, of whom ſome boldly avowed their profeſſion, and died in the cauſe; others denied that they were Chriſtians; others acknowledging that they had once been Chriſtians, declared that they had long ceaſed to be ſuch." All which demonſtrates, that the

profeſſion

profeſſion of Chriſtianity was at that time (in that country at leaſt) attended with fear and danger: and yet this took place without any edict from the Roman ſovereign, commanding or authoriſing the perſecution of Chriſtians. This obſervation is farther confirmed by a reſcript of Adrian to Minucius Fundanus, the pro-conſul of Aſia:[a] from which reſcript it appears, that the cuſtom of the people of Aſia was to proceed againſt the Chriſtians with tumult and uproar. This diſorderly practice, I ſay, is recogniſed in the edict, becauſe the emperor enjoins, that, for the future, if the Chriſtians were guilty they ſhould be legally brought to trial, and not be purſued by importunity and clamour.

Martial wrote a few years before the younger Pliny; and, as his manner was, made the ſufferings of the Chriſtians the ſubject of his ridicule.[b] Nothing however could ſhow the notoriety of the fact with more certainty than this does. Martial's teſtimony, as well indeed as Pliny's, goes alſo to another point, viz. that the deaths of theſe men were martyrdoms in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, that is to ſay, were ſo voluntary, that it was in their power, at the time of pronouncing the ſentence, to have averted the execution, by conſenting to join in heathen ſacrifices.

The conſtancy, and by conſequence the ſufferings, of the Chriſtians of this period, is alſo referred to by Epictetus, who imputes their intrepidity to madneſs, or to a kind of faſhion or habit; and about fifty years afterwards, by Marcus Aurelius, who aſcribes it to obſtinacy. "Is it poſſible (Epictetus aſks) that a man may arrive at this temper, and become indifferent to thoſe things, from madneſs or from habit, *as the Galileans?*"[c] "Let this preparation of the mind

[a] Lard. Heath. Teſt. v. II. p. 110.

[b] In matutina nuper ſpectatus arena
Mucius, impoſuit qui ſua membra focis,
Si patiens fortiſque tibi duruſque videtur,
Ab deritanæ pectora plebis habes;
Nam cum dicatur tunicâ præſente moleſtâ,
Ure* manum plus eſt dicere non facio.

[c] Epic. l. iv. c. 7.

* *Forſan* "*thure manum.*"

mind (to die) ariſe from its own judgment, and not from obſtinacy *like the Chriſtians.*" [a]

[a] Marc. Aur. Med. l. xi. c. 3.

## CHAP. III.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence, that many, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

OF the primitive condition of Chriſtianity, a diſtant only and general view can be acquired from heathen writers. It is in our own books that the detail and interior of the tranſaction muſt be ſought for. And this is nothing different from what might be expected. Who would write a hiſtory of Chriſtianity but a Chriſtian? Who was likely to record the travels, ſufferings, labours, or ſucceſſes of the apoſtles, but one of their own number, or of their followers? Now theſe books come up in their accounts to the full extent of the propoſition which we maintain. We have four hiſtories of Jeſus Chriſt. We have a hiſtory taking up the narrative from his death, and carrying on an account of the propagation of the religion, and of ſome of the moſt eminent perſons engaged in it, for a ſpace of nearly thirty years. We have, what ſome may think ſtill more original, a collection of letters, written by certain principal agents in the buſineſs, upon the buſineſs, and in the midſt of their concern and connexion with it. And we have theſe writings ſeverally atteſting the point which we contend for, viz. the ſufferings of the witneſſes of the hiſtory, and atteſting it in every variety of form in which it can be conceived to appear; directly and indirectly, expreſsly and incidentally,

incidentally, by aſſertion, recital and alluſion, by narratives of facts, and by arguments and diſcourſes built upon theſe facts, either referring to them, or neceſſarily preſuppoſing them.

I remark this variety, becauſe in examining ancient records, or indeed any ſpecies of teſtimony, it is, in my opinion, of the greateſt importance to attend to the information or grounds of argument which are *caſually* and *undeſignedly* diſcloſed; foraſmuch as this ſpecies of proof is, of all others, the leaſt liable to be corrupted by fraud or miſrepreſentation.

I may be allowed therefore in the inquiry which is now before us, to ſuggeſt ſome concluſions of this ſort as preparatory to more direct teſtimony.

1. Our books relate, that Jeſus Chriſt, the founder of the religion, was, in conſequence of his undertaking, put to death, as a malefactor, at Jeruſalem. This point at leaſt will be granted, becauſe it is no more than what Tacitus has recorded. They then proceed to tell us, that the religion was, *notwithſtanding*, ſet forth at the ſame city of Jeruſalem, propagated from thence throughout Judea, and afterwards preached in other parts of the Roman empire. Theſe points alſo are fully confirmed by Tacitus, who informs us, that the religion, after a ſhort check, broke out again in the country where it took its riſe; that it not only ſpread throughout Judea, but had reached Rome; and that it had there great multitudes of converts: and all this within thirty years after its commencement. Now theſe facts afford a ſtrong inference in behalf of the propoſition which we maintain. What could the diſciples of Chriſt expect for themſelves, when they ſaw their maſter put to death? Could they hope to eſcape the dangers in which he had periſhed? If they have perſecuted me, they will alſo perſecute you, was the warning of common ſenſe. With this example before their eyes, they could not be without a full ſenſe of the peril of their future enterpriſe.

2. Secondly,

2. Secondly, all the hiſtories agree in repreſenting Chriſt as foretelling the perſecution of his followers.

"Then ſhall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and ſhall kill you, and ye ſhall be hated of all nations for my name's ſake."[a]

"When affliction or perſecution ariſeth for the word's ſake, immediately they are offended."[b]

"They ſhall lay hands on you, and perſecute you, delivering you up to the ſynagogues, and into priſons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's ſake—and ye ſhall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinſfolks and friends, and ſome of you ſhall they cauſe to be put to death."[c]

"The time cometh, that he that killeth you will think that he doeth God ſervice. And theſe things will they do unto you, becauſe they have not known the Father nor me. But theſe things have I told you, that when the time ſhall come ye may remember that I told you of them."[d]

I am not entitled to argue from theſe paſſages, that Chriſt actually did foretell theſe events, and that they did accordingly come to paſs, becauſe that would be at once to aſſume the truth of the religion: but I am entitled to contend, that one ſide or other of the following disjunction is true, either that the evangeliſts have delivered what Chriſt really ſpoke, and that the event correſponded with the prediction; or that they put the prediction into Chriſt's mouth, becauſe, at the time of writing the hiſtory, the event had turned out ſo to be: for the only two remaining ſuppoſitions appear in the higheſt degree incredible, which are, either that Chriſt filled the minds of his followers with fears and apprehenſions, without any reaſon or authority for what he ſaid, and contrary to the truth of the caſe; or that, although Chriſt had never foretold any ſuch thing, and the event would have contradicted him if he had, yet hiſtorians

[a] Matt. xxiv. 9. [b] Mark iv. 17. ſee alſo x. 30.
[c] Luke xxi. 12—16. ſee alſo xi. 49.
[d] John xvi. 4. ſee alſo xv. 20, and xvi. 33.

hiſtorians who lived in the age when the event was known, falſely as well as officiouſly, aſcribed theſe words to him.

3. Thirdly, theſe books abound with exhortations to patience, and with topics of comfort under diſtreſs.

"Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? Nay, in all theſe things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."[a]

"We are troubled on every ſide yet not diſtreſſed; we are perplexed, but not in deſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down but not deſtroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jeſus, that the life alſo of Jeſus might be made manifeſt in our body—knowing that he which raiſed up the Lord Jeſus ſhall raiſe us up alſo by Jeſus, and ſhall preſent us with you—for which cauſe we faint not, but, though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day; for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."[b]

"Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have ſpoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of ſuffering affliction, and of patience. Behold we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have ſeen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy."[c]

"Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions, partly whilſt ye were made a gazing ſtock both by reproaches and afflictions, and partly whilſt ye became companions of them that were ſo uſed; for ye had compaſſion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the ſpoiling of your goods, knowing in yourſelves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring ſubſtance. Caſt not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompenſe of reward; for



[a] Rom. viii. 35, 37. [b] 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17.
[c] James v. 10, 11.

ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promiſe." [a]

"So that we ourſelves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your perſecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifeſt token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom, for which ye alſo ſuffer." [b]

"We rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not only ſo, but we glory in tribulations alſo; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." [c]

"Beloved, think it not ſtrange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though ſome ſtrange thing happened unto you, but rejoice, inaſmuch as ye are partakers of Chriſt's ſufferings. Wherefore let them that ſuffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their ſouls to him in well doing as unto a faithful Creator." [d]

What could all theſe texts mean, if there was nothing in the circumſtances of the times which required patience, which called for the exerciſe of conſtancy and reſolution? or will it be pretended that theſe exhortations (which, let it be obſerved, come not from one author, but from many) were put in, merely to induce a belief in after ages, that the firſt Chriſtians were expoſed to dangers which they were not expoſed to, or underwent ſufferings which they did not undergo. If theſe books belong to the age to which they lay claim, and in which age, whether genuine or ſpurious, they certainly did appear, this ſuppoſition cannot be maintained for a moment; becauſe I think it impoſſible to believe, that paſſages, which muſt be deemed not only unintelligible but falſe, by the perſons into whoſe hands the books upon their publication were to come, ſhould nevertheleſs be inſerted, for the purpoſe of producing an effect upon remote generations. In forgeries which do

[a] Heb. x. 32—36. [b] 2 Theſſ. i. 1—5.
[c] Rom. v. 3, 4. [d] 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, 19.

do not appear till many ages after that to which they pretend to belong, it is poſſible that ſome contrivance of that ſort may take place; but in no others can it be attempted.

## CHAP. IV.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence that many, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

THE account of the treatment of the religion and of the exertions of its firſt preachers, as ſtated in our ſcriptures, not in a profeſſed hiſtory of perſecutions, or in the connected manner in which I am about to recite it, but diſperſedly and occaſionally, in the courſe of a mixed, general hiſtory, (which circumſtance alone negatives the ſuppoſition of any fraudulent deſign) is the following; "That the founder of Chriſtianity, from the commencement of his miniſtry to the time of his violent death, employed himſelf wholly in publiſhing the inſtitution in Judea and Galilee; that, in order to aſſiſt him in this purpoſe, he made choice, out of the number of his followers, of twelve perſons, who might accompany him as he travelled from place to place; that, except a ſhort abſence upon a journey, in which he ſent them, two by two, to announce his miſſion, and one, of a few days, when they went before him to Jeruſalem, theſe perſons were ſtatedly and conſtantly attending upon him; that they were with him at Jeruſalem when he was apprehended and put to death; and that they were commiſſioned by him, when his own miniſtry was concluded, to publiſh his goſpel, and collect

collect diſciples to it from all countries of the world." The account then proceeds to ſtate, "That, a few days after his departure, theſe perſons, with ſome of his relations, and ſome who had regularly frequented their ſociety, aſſembled at Jeruſalem; that, conſidering the office of preaching the religion as now devolved upon them, and one of their number having deſerted the cauſe, and, repenting of his perfidy, having deſtroyed himſelf, they proceeded to elect another into his place, and that they were careful to make their election out of the number of thoſe who had accompanied their maſter from the firſt to the laſt, in order, as they alleged, that he might be a witneſs, together with themſelves, of the principal facts which they were about to produce and relate concerning him; [a] that they began their work at Jeruſalem, by publickly aſſerting that this Jeſus, whom the rulers and inhabitants of that place had ſo lately crucified, was, in truth, the perſon in whom all their prophecies and long expectations terminated; that he had been ſent amongſt them by God; and that he was appointed by God the future judge of the human ſpecies; that all, who were ſolicitous to ſecure to themſelves happineſs after death, ought to receive him as ſuch, and to make profeſſion of their belief, by being baptized in his name." [b] The hiſtory goes on to relate, "that conſiderable numbers accepted this propoſal, and that thoſe who did ſo, formed amongſt themſelves a ſtrict union and ſociety; [c] that, the attention of the Jewiſh government being ſoon drawn upon them, two of the principal perſons of the twelve, and who alſo had lived moſt intimately and conſtantly with the founder of the religion, were ſeized as they were diſcourſing to the people in the temple; that, after being kept all night in priſon, they were brought the next day before an aſſembly, compoſed of the chief perſons of the Jewiſh magiſtracy and prieſthood; that this aſſembly, after ſome conſultation, found nothing, at that time, better to be done towards ſuppreſſing the growth of the ſect, than to threaten their priſoners

[a] Acts i. 21, 22. [b] Acts xi. [c] Acts v. 41.

priſoners with puniſhment, if they perſiſted; that theſe men, after expreſſing, in decent but firm language, the obligation under which they conſidered themſelves to be, to declare what they knew, "to ſpeak the things which they had ſeen and heard," returned from the council, and reported what had paſſed to their companions: that this report, whilſt it appriſed them of the danger of their ſituation and undertaking, had no other effect upon their conduct, than to produce in them a general reſolution to perſevere, and an earneſt prayer to God to furniſh them with aſſiſtance, and to inſpire them with fortitude, proportioned to the increaſing exigency of the ſervice."[a] A very ſhort time after this, we read "that all the twelve apoſtles were ſeized and caſt into priſon;[b] that, being brought a ſecond time before the Jewiſh Sanhedrim, they were upbraided with their diſobedience to the injunction which had been laid upon them, and beaten for their contumacy; that, being charged once more to deſiſt, they were ſuffered to depart; that, however, they neither quitted Jeruſalem, nor ceaſed from preaching, both daily in the temple, and from houſe to houſe;[c] and that the twelve conſidered themſelves as ſo entirely and excluſively devoted to this office, that they now transferred, what may be called the temporal affairs of the ſociety, to other hands."[d]

Hitherto

[a] Acts iv. [b] Acts v. 18. [c] Acts v.

[d] I do not know that it has ever been inſinuated, that the Chriſtian miſſion, in the hands of the apoſtles, was a ſcheme for making a fortune, or for getting money. But it may nevertheleſs be fit to remark upon this paſſage of their hiſtory, how perfectly free they appear to have been from any pecuniary or intereſted views whatever. The moſt tempting opportunity, which occurred, of making a gain of their converts, was by the cuſtody and management of the public funds, when ſome of the richer members, intending to contribute their fortunes to the common ſupport of the ſociety, ſold their poſſeſſions, and laid down the prices at the apoſtles' feet. Yet ſo inſenſible, or undeſirous were they of the advantage which that confidence afforded, that, we find, they very ſoon diſpoſed of the truſt, by putting it into the hands, not

of

Hitherto the preachers of the new religion ſeem to have had the common people on their ſide; which is aſſigned as the reaſon, why the Jewiſh rulers did not, at this time, think it prudent to proceed to greater extremities. It was not long, however, before the enemies of the inſtitution found means to repreſent it to the people as tending to ſubvert their law, degrade their law-giver, and diſhonour their temple.[a] And theſe inſinuations were diſperſed with ſo much ſucceſs, as to induce the people to join with their ſuperiors in the ſtoning of a very active member of the new community.

The death of this man was the ſignal of a general perſecution; which raged at Jeruſalem with ſo much fury, as to drive moſt[b] of the new converts out of the place, except the twelve apoſtles. The converts, thus "ſcattered abroad," preached the religion whereever they came; and their preaching was, in effect, the preaching of the *twelve*, for it was ſo far carried on in concert and correſpondence with *them*, that, when they heard of the ſucceſs of their emiſſaries in a particular country, they ſent two of their number to the place to complete and confirm the miſſion.

An event now took place of great importance in the future hiſtory of the religion. The[c] perſecution which had begun

of nominees of their own, but of ſtewards formally elected for the purpoſe by the ſociety at large.

We may add alſo, that this exceſs of generoſity, which caſt private property into the public ſtock, was ſo far from being required by the apoſtles, or impoſed as a law of Chriſtianity, that Peter reminds Ananias that he had been guilty, in his behaviour, of an officious and voluntary prevarication; for whilſt, ſays he, thy eſtate remained unſold, "was it not thine own? and, after it was ſold, was it not thine own power?"

[a] Acts vi. 12.

[b] Acts viii. 1. "And they were *all* ſcattered abroad;" but the term "all" is not, I think, to be taken ſtrictly, or as denoting more than the *generality*; in like manner as in Acts ix. 35. "And *all* that dwelt at Lydda and Saron ſaw him, and turned to the Lord."

[c] Acts ix.

begun at Jeruſalem, followed the Chriſtians to other cities, in which the authority of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim over thoſe of their own nation was allowed to be exerciſed. A young man, who had ſignalized himſelf by his hoſtility to the profeſſion, and had procured a commiſſion from the council at Jeruſalem to ſeize any converted Jews whom he might find at Damaſcus, ſuddenly became a proſelyte to the religion which he was going about to extirpate. The new convert not only ſhared, upon this extraordinary change, the fate of his companions, but brought upon himſelf a double meaſure of enmity from the party which he had left. The Jews at Damaſcus, upon his return to that city, watched the gates night and day with ſo much diligence, that he eſcaped from their hands only by being let down in a baſket by the wall. Nor did he find himſelf in greater ſafety at Jeruſalem, whither he immediately repaired. Attempts were there alſo ſoon ſet on foot to deſtroy him, from the danger of which he was preſerved by being ſent away to Cilicia, his native country.

For ſome reaſon, not mentioned, perhaps not known, but probably connected with the civil hiſtory of the Jews, or with ſome danger[a] which engroſſed the public attention, an intermiſſion about this time took place in the ſufferings of the Chriſtians. This happened, at the moſt only ſeven or eight, perhaps only three or four years after Chriſt's death; within which period, and notwithſtanding that the late perſecution occupied part of it, churches, or ſocieties of believers, had been formed in all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; for we read that the churches in theſe countries "had now reſt, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt, were multiplied."[b] The original preachers of the religion did not

[a] Dr. Lardner (in which he is followed alſo by Dr. Benſon) aſcribes this ceſſation of the perſecution of the Chriſtians to the attempt of Caligula to ſet up his own ſtatue in the temple of Jeruſalem, and to the conſternation thereby excited in the minds of the Jewiſh people; which conſternation for a ſeaſon excluded every other conteſt.

[b] Acts ix. 31.

not remit their labours or activity during this ſeaſon of quietneſs; for we find one, and he a very principal perſon amongſt them, paſſing throughout all quarters. We find alſo thoſe, who had been before expelled from Jeruſalem by the perſecution which raged there, travelling as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch: [a] and laſtly, we find Jeruſalem again the centre of the miſſion, the place whither the preachers returned from their ſeveral excurſions, where they reported the conduct and effects of their miniſtry, where queſtions of public concern were canvaſſed and ſettled, from whence directions were ſought, and teachers ſent forth.

The time of this tranquillity did not, however, continue long. Herod Agrippa, who had lately acceded to the government of Judea, "ſtretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church." [b] He began his cruelty by beheading one of the twelve original apoſtles, a kinſman and conſtant companion of the founder of the religion. Perceiving that this execution gratified the Jews, he proceeded to ſeize, in order to put to death, another of the number; and him like the former, aſſociated with Chriſt during his life, and eminently active in the ſervice ſince his death. This man was, however, delivered from priſon, as the account ſtates, [c] miraculouſly, and made his eſcape from Jeruſalem.

Theſe things are related, not in the general terms under which, in giving the outlines of the hiſtory, we have here mentioned them, but with the utmoſt particularity of names, perſons, places, and circumſtances; and, what is deſerving of notice, without the ſmalleſt diſcoverable propenſity in the hiſtorian to magnify the fortitude, or exaggerate the ſufferings, of his party. When they fled for their lives, he tells us. When the churches had reſt, he remarks it. When the people took their part, he does not leave it without notice. When the apoſtles were carried a ſecond time before the Sanhedrim, he is careful to obſerve that they were brought without violence. When milder councils were

[a] Acts xi. 19. [b] Acts xii. 1. [c] Acts xii. 3—17.

were ſuggeſted, he gives us the author of the advice, and the ſpeech which contained it. When, in conſequence of this advice, the rulers contented themſelves with threatening the apoſtles, and commanding them to be beaten with ſtripes without urging at that time the perſecution farther, the hiſtorian candidly and diſtinctly records their forbearance. When, therefore, in other inſtances, he ſtates heavier perſecutions or actual martyrdoms, it is reaſonable to believe that he ſtates them becauſe they were true; and not from any wiſh to aggravate, in his account, the ſufferings which Chriſtians ſuſtained, or to extol, more than it deſerved, their patience under them.

Our hiſtory now purſues a narrower path. Leaving the reſt of the apoſtles, and the original aſſociates of Chriſt, engaged in the propagation of the new faith, (and who, there is not the leaſt reaſon to believe, abated in their diligence or courage) the narrative proceeds with the ſeparate memoirs of that eminent teacher, whoſe extraordinary and ſudden converſion to the religion, and correſponding change of conduct, had before been circumſtantially deſcribed. This perſon, in conjunction with another, who appeared amongſt the earlieſt members of the ſociety at Jeruſalem, and amongſt the immediate adherents[a] of the twelve apoſtles, ſet out from Antioch upon the expreſs buſineſs of carrying the new religion through the various provinces of the leſſer Aſia.[b] During this expedition we find, that in almoſt every place to which they came, their perſons were inſulted, and their lives endangered. After being expelled from Antioch in Piſidia, they repaired to Iconium.[c] At Iconium an attempt was made to ſtone them. At Lyſtra, whither they fled from Iconium, one of them actually was ſtoned, and drawn out of the city for dead.[d] Theſe two men, though not themſelves original apoſtles, were acting in connexion and conjunction with the original apoſtles; for, after the completion of their journey, being ſent upon a particular commiſſion to



Jeruſalem,

[a] Acts iv. 36. [b] Acts xiii. 2. [c] Acts xiii. 50. [d] Acts xiv. 5.

Jeruſalem, they there related to the apoſtles[a] and elders the events and ſucceſs of their miniſtry, and were in return, recommended by them to the churches, "as men who had hazarded their lives in the cauſe."

The treatment which they had experienced in their firſt progreſs did not deter them from preparing for a ſecond. Upon a diſpute, however, ariſing between them, but not connected with the common ſubject of their labours, they acted as wiſe and ſincere men would act; they did not retire in diſguſt from the ſervice in which they were engaged, but, each devoting his endeavours to the advancement of the religion, they parted from one another, and ſet forwards upon ſeparate routs. The hiſtory goes along with one of them; and the ſecond enterpriſe to him was attended with the ſame dangers and perſecutions as both had met with in the firſt. The apoſtle's travels hitherto had been confined to Aſia. He now croſſes, for the firſt time, the Ægean Sea, and carries with him, amongſt others, the perſon whoſe accounts ſupply the information we are ſtating.[b] The firſt place in Greece at which he appears to have ſtopped was Philippi in Macedonia. Here himſelf and one of his companions were cruelly whipped, caſt into priſon, and kept there under the moſt rigorous cuſtody, being thruſt, whilſt yet ſmarting with their wounds, into the inner dungeon, and their feet made faſt in the ſtocks.[c] Notwithſtanding this unequivocal ſpecimen of the uſage they had to look for in that country, they went forward in the execution of their errand. After paſſing through Amphipolis and Appolonia, they came to Theſſalonica; in which city the houſe in which they lodged was aſſailed by a party of their enemies, in order to bring them out to the populace. And when, fortunately for their preſervation, they were not found at home, the maſter of the houſe was dragged before the magiſtrate for admitting them within his doors.[d] Their reception at the next city was ſomething better; but neither here had they continued

[a] Acts xv. 12—26. [b] Acts xvi. 11.
[c] V. 23, 24, 33. [d] Acts xvii. 1—5.

ued long before their turbulent adverſaries, the Jews, excited againſt them ſuch commotions amongſt the inhabitants, as obliged the apoſtle to make his eſcape by a private journey to Athens.[a] The extremity of the progreſs was Corinth. His abode in this city, for ſome time, ſeems to have been without moleſtation. At length, however, the Jews found means to ſtir up an inſurrection againſt him, and to bring him before the tribunal of the Roman preſident.[b] It was to the contempt which that magiſtrate entertained for the Jews and their controverſies, of which he accounted Chriſtianity to be one, that our apoſtle owed his deliverance.[c]

This indefatigable teacher, after leaving Corinth, returned by Epheſus into Syria; and again viſited Jeruſalem, and the ſociety of Chriſtians in that city, which, as hath been repeatedly obſerved, ſtill continued the centre of the miſſion.[d] It ſuited not, however, with the activity of his zeal to remain long at Jeruſalem. We find him going from thence to Antioch, and, after ſome ſtay there, traverſing once more the northern provinces of Aſia Minor.[e] This progreſs ended at Epheſus; in which city the apoſtle continued in the daily exerciſe of his miniſtry two years, and until his ſucceſs, at length, excited the apprehenſions of thoſe who were intereſted in the ſupport of the national worſhip. Their clamour produced a tumult, in which he had nearly loſt his life.[f] Undiſmayed, however, by the dangers to which he ſaw himſelf expoſed, he was driven from Epheſus only to renew his labours in Greece.[g] After paſſing over Macedonia, he thence proceeded to his former ſtation at Corinth.[h] When he had formed his deſign of returning by a direct courſe from Corinth into Syria, he was compelled by a conſpiracy of the Jews, who were prepared to intercept him on his way, to trace back his ſteps through Macedonia to Philippi, and from thence to take ſhipping into Aſia.

Along

[a] V. 13. [b] Acts xviii. 12. [c] Acts xviii. 15.
[d] V. 22. [e] V. 23. [f] Acts xix. 1, 9, 10.
[g] V. 29, 31. [h] Acts xix. 1.

Along the coaſt of Aſia he purſued his voyage with all the expedition he could command, in order to reach Jeruſalem againſt the feaſt of Pentecoſt.[a] His reception at Jeruſalem was of a piece with the uſage he had experienced from the Jews in other places. He had been only a few days in that city when the populace, inſtigated by ſome of his old opponents in Aſia who attended this feaſt, ſeized him in the temple, forced him out of it, and were ready immediately to have deſtroyed him, had not the ſudden preſence of the Roman guard reſcued him out of their hands.[b] The officer, however, who had thus ſeaſonably interpoſed, acted from his care of the public peace, with the preſervation of which he was charged, and not from any favour to the apoſtle, or indeed any diſpoſition to exerciſe either juſtice or humanity towards him; for he had no ſooner ſecured his perſon in the fortreſs, than he was proceeding to examine him by torture.[c]

From this time to the concluſion of the hiſtory the apoſtle remains in public cuſtody of the Roman government. After eſcaping aſſaſſination by a fortunate diſcovery of the plot, and delivering himſelf from the influence of his enemies by an appeal to the audience of the emperor,[d] he was ſent, but not until he had ſuffered two years impriſonment, to Rome.[e] He reached Italy after a tedious voyage, and after encountering in his paſſage the perils of a deſperate ſhipwreck.[f] But although ſtill a priſoner, and his fate ſtill depending, neither the various and long-continued ſufferings which he had undergone, nor the danger of his preſent ſituation, deterred him from perſiſting in preaching the religion; for the hiſtorian cloſes the account by telling us, that, for two years, he received all that came unto him in his own hired houſe, where he was permitted to dwell with a ſoldier that guarded him, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching thoſe things which concern the Lord Jeſus Chriſt with all confidence."

Now

[a] Acts xix. 16. [b] Acts xxi. 27—33. [c] Acts xxii. 12, 24. [d] Acts xxv. 9, 11. [e] Acts xxiv. 27. [f] Acts xvii.

Now the hiſtorian, from whom we have drawn this account, in the part of his narrative which relates to St. Paul, is ſupported by the ſtrongeſt corroborating teſtimony that a hiſtory can receive. We are in poſſeſſion of letters written by St. Paul himſelf upon the ſubject of his miniſtry, and either written during the period which the hiſtory compriſes, or, if written afterwards, reciting and referring to the tranſactions of that period. Theſe letters, without borrowing from the hiſtory, or the hiſtory from them, unintentionally confirm the account which the hiſtory delivers in a great variety of particulars. What belongs to our preſent purpoſe is the deſcription exhibited of the apoſtle's ſufferings: And the repreſentation given in the hiſtory, of the dangers and diſtreſſes which he underwent, not only agrees, in general, with the language which he himſelf uſes, whenever he ſpeaks of his life or miniſtry, but is alſo, in many inſtances, atteſted by a ſpecific correſpondency of time, place, and order of events. If the hiſtorian relates that at Philippi, the apoſtle "was beaten with many ſtripes, caſt into priſon, and there treated with rigour and indignity,"[a] we find him, in a letter[b] to a neighbouring church, reminding his converts, that "after he had ſuffered before, and was ſhamefully entreated at Philippi, he was bold, nevertheleſs, to ſpeak unto them (to whoſe city he next came) the goſpel of God." If the hiſtory relate,[c] that, at Theſſalonica, the houſe in which the apoſtle was lodged, when he firſt came to that place, was aſſaulted by the populace, and the maſter of it dragged before the magiſtrate for admitting ſuch a gueſt within his doors, the apoſtle, in his letters[d] to the Chriſtians of Theſſalonica, calls to their remembrance, "how they had received the goſpel in much affliction." If the hiſtory deliver an account of an inſurrection at Epheſus, which had nearly coſt the apoſtle his life, we have the apoſtle himſelf, in a letter written a ſhort time after his departure from that city, deſcribing his deſpair, and returning thanks for his deliverance.[e] If the

 hiſtory

[a] Acts xvi. 24. [b] 1 Theſſ. ii. 2. [c] Acts xvii. 57.
[d] 1 Theſſ. i. 6. [e] Acts xix. 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

hiſtory inform us, that the apoſtle was expelled from Antioch in Piſidia, attempted to be ſtoned at Iconium, and actually ſtoned at Lyſtra, there is preſerved a letter from him to a favourite convert, whom, as the ſame hiſtory tells us, he firſt met with in theſe parts; in which letter he appeals to that diſciple's knowledge "of the perſecutions which befel him at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lyſtra."[a] If the hiſtory make the apoſtle, in his ſpeech to the Epheſian elders, remind them, as one proof of the diſintereſtedneſs of his views, that, to their knowledge, he had ſupplied his own and the neceſſities of his companions by perſonal labour,[b] we find the ſame apoſtle, in a letter written during his reſidence at Epheſus, aſſerting of himſelf, "that even to that hour he laboured, working with his own hands."[c]

Theſe coincidences, together with many relative to other parts of the apoſtle's hiſtory, and *all* drawn from independent ſources, not only confirm the truth of the account, in the particular points as to which they are obſerved, but add much to the credit of the narrative in all its parts: and ſupport the author's profeſſion of being a contemporary of the perſon whoſe hiſtory he writes, and, throughout a material portion of his narrative, a companion.

What the epiſtles of the apoſtles declare of the ſuffering ſtate of Chriſtianity, the writings which remain of their companions, and immediate followers, expreſsly confirm.

Clement, who is honourably mentioned by St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Philippians,[d] hath left us his atteſtation to this point in the following words: "Let us take (ſays he) the examples of our own age. Through zeal and envy the moſt faithful and righteous pillars of the church have been perſecuted even to the moſt grievous deaths. Let us ſet before our eyes *the holy apoſtles*. Peter, by unjuſt envy, underwent, not one or two, but many ſufferings; till at laſt, being martyred, he went to the place of glory that was due unto him. For the ſame cauſe did Paul, in like

[a] Acts xiii. 50.—xix. 5, 19. 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.
[b] Acts xx. 34. [c] 1 Cor. iv. 11, 12. [d] Acts iv. 3.

like manner, receive the reward of his patience. Seven times he was in bonds ; he was whipped, was ſtoned ; he preached both in the eaſt and in the weſt ; leaving behind him the glorious report of his faith : and ſo having taught the whole world righteouſneſs, and for that end travelled even unto the utmoſt bounds of the weſt, he at laſt ſuffered martyrdom by the command of the governors, and departed out of the world, and went unto his holy place, being become a moſt eminent pattern of patience unto all ages. To theſe holy apoſtles were joined a very great number of others, who having through envy undergone, in like manner, many pains and torments, have left a glorious example to us. For this, not only men, but women, have been perſecuted ; and having ſuffered very grievous and cruel puniſhments, have finiſhed the courſe of their faith with firmneſs."[a]

Hermas, ſaluted by St. Paul in his epiſtle to the Romans, in a piece very little connected with hiſtorical recitals, thus ſpeaks—"Such as have believed and ſuffered death for the name of Chriſt, and have endured with a ready mind, and have given up their lives with all their hearts."[b]

Polycarp, the diſciple of John, though all that remains of his works be a very ſhort epiſtle, has not left this ſubject unnoticed. "I exhort (ſays he) all of you, that ye obey the word of righteouſneſs, and exerciſe all patience, which ye have ſeen ſet forth before your eyes, not only in the bleſſed Ignatius, and Lorimus, and Ruſus, but in others among yourſelves, and in *Paul himſelf and the reſt of the apoſtles ;* being confident in this, that all theſe have not run in vain, but in faith and righteouſneſs ; and are gone to the place that was due to them from the Lord, with whom alſo they ſuffered. For they loved not this preſent world, but him who died and was raiſed again by God for us."[c]

Ignatius,

[a] Clem. ad Cor. c. v. vi. A. B. Wake's tranſ.
[b] Shepherd of Hermas, c. xxviii.
[c] Pol. ad Phil. c. ix.

Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, recognizes the ſame topic, briefly indeed, but poſitively and preciſely. "For this cauſe (i. e. for having felt and handled Chriſt's body after his reſurrection, and being convinced, as Ignatius expreſſes it, both by his fleſh and ſpirit) they (i. e. Peter, and thoſe who were preſent with Peter at Chriſt's appearance) deſpiſed death, and were found to be above it."[a]

Would the reader know what a perſecution in theſe days was, I would refer him to a circular letter, written by the church of Smyrna ſoon after the death of Polycarp, who, it will be remembered, had lived with St. John; and which letter is entitled a relation of that biſhop's martyrdom. "The ſufferings (ſay they) of all the other martyrs were bleſſed and generous, which they underwent according to the will of God. For ſo it becomes us, who are more religious than others, to aſcribe the power and ordering of all things unto him. And indeed who can chooſe but admire the greatneſs of their minds, and that admirable patience and love of their Maſter, which then appeared in them? who, when they were ſo flayed with whipping, that the frame and ſtructure of their bodies were laid open to their very inward veins and arteries, nevertheleſs endured it. In like manner, thoſe who were condemned to the beaſts, and kept a long time in priſon, underwent many cruel torments, being forced to lie upon ſharp ſpikes laid under their bodies, and tormented with divers other ſorts of puniſhments; that ſo, if it were poſſible, the tyrant, by the length of their ſufferings, might have brought them to deny Chriſt."[b]

[a] 19. Ep. Smyr. c. iii.
[b] Rel. Mor. Pol. c. ii.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

*There is satisfactory evidence, that many, professing to have been original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*

UPON the history, of which the last chapter contains an abstract, there are a few observations which it may be proper to make, by way of applying its testimony to the particular propositions for which we contend.

I. Although our scripture history leaves the general account of the apostles in an early part of the narrative, and proceeds with the separate account of one particular apostle, yet the information which it delivers so far extends to the rest; as it shows *the nature of the service*. When we see one apostle suffering persecution in the discharge of his commission, we shall not believe, without evidence, that the same office could, at the same time, be attended with ease and safety to others. And this fair and reasonable inference is confirmed by the direct attestation of the letters, to which we have so often referred. The writer of these letters not only alludes, in numerous passages, to his own sufferings, but speaks of the rest of the apostles as enduring like sufferings with himself. "I think that God hath set forth *us the apostles* last, as it were, appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men—even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffetted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labour working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and as the offscouring of all

all things unto this day."[a] Add to which, that in the ſhort account that is given of the other apoſtles, in the former part of the hiſtory, and within the ſhort period which that account compriſes, we find, firſt, two of them ſeized, impriſoned, brought before the Sanhedrim, and threatened with further puniſhment;[b] then, the whole number impriſoned and beaten:[c] ſoon afterwards, one of their adherents ſtoned to death, and ſo hot a perſecution raiſed againſt the ſect, as to drive moſt of them out of the place; a ſhort time only ſucceeding, before one of the twelve was beheaded, and another ſentenced to the ſame fate; and all this paſſing in the ſingle city of Jeruſalem, and within ten years after the founder's death, and the commencement of the inſtitution.

II. Secondly; we take no credit at preſent for the miraculous part of the narrative, nor do we inſiſt upon the correctneſs of ſingle paſſages of it. If the whole ſtory be not a novel, a romance; the whole action a dream; if Peter, and James and Paul, and the reſt of the apoſtles, mentioned in the account, be not all imaginary perſons; if their letters be not all forgeries; and, what is more, forgeries of names and characters which never exiſted; then is there evidence in our hands ſufficient to ſupport the only fact we contend for, (and which I repeat again, is, in itſelf, highly probable) that the original followers of Jeſus Chriſt exerted great endeavours to propagate his religion, and underwent great labours, dangers, and ſufferings, in conſequence of their undertaking.

III. The general reality of the apoſtolic hiſtory is ſtrongly confirmed by the conſideration, that it, in truth, does no more than aſſign adequate cauſes for effects which certainly were produced, and deſcribe conſequences naturally reſulting from ſituations which certainly exiſted. The *effects* were certainly there, of which this hiſtory ſets forth the cauſe, and origin, and progreſs. It is acknowledged on all hands, becauſe it is recorded by other teſtimony than that of the Chriſtians themſelves, that the religion

[a] 1 Cor. iv. et ſeq. [b] Acts iv. 3, 21. [c] Acts v. 18, 40.

ligion began to prevail at that time, and in that country. It is very difficult to conceive how it could begin, or prevail at all, without the exertions of the founder and his followers in propagating the new perſuaſion. The hiſtory now in our hands deſcribes theſe exertions, the perſons employed, the means and endeavours made uſe of, and the labours undertaken in the proſecution of this purpoſe. Again; the treatment which the hiſtory deſcribes the firſt propagators of the religion to have experienced, was no other than what naturally reſulted from the ſituation in which they were confeſſedly placed. It is admitted that the religion was adverſe, in a great degree, to the reigning opinions, and to the hopes and wiſhes of the nation to which it was firſt introduced; and that it overthrew, ſo far as it was received, the eſtabliſhed theology and worſhip of every other country. We cannot feel much reluctance in believing that, when the meſſengers of ſuch a ſyſtem went about not only publiſhing their opinions, but collecting proſelytes, and forming regular ſocieties of proſelytes, they ſhould meet with oppoſition in their attempts, or that this oppoſition ſhould ſometimes proceed to fatal extremities. Our hiſtory details examples of this oppoſition, and of the ſufferings and dangers which the emiſſaries of the religion underwent, perfectly agreeable to what might reaſonably be expected, from the nature of their undertaking, compared with the character of the age and country in which it was carried on.

IV. Fourthly; the records before us ſupply evidence of what formed another member of our general propoſition, and what, as hath already been obſerved, is highly probable, and almoſt a neceſſary conſequence of their new profeſſion, viz. that, together with activity and courage in propagating the religion, the primitive followers of Jeſus aſſumed, upon their converſion, a new and peculiar courſe of private life. Immediately after their Maſter was withdrawn from them, we hear of their "continuing with one accord in prayer and ſupplication,"[a] of their "continuing daily

[a] Acts i. 14.

daily with one accord in the temple,"[a] of "many being gathered together praying."[b] We know what ſtrict injunctions were laid upon the converts by their teachers: whereever they came, the firſt word of their preaching was "repent." We know that theſe injunctions obliged them to refrain from many ſpecies of licentiouſneſs, which were not, at that time, reputed criminal. We know the rules of purity, and the maxims of benevolence, which Chriſtians read in their books; concerning which rules, it is enough to obſerve, that, if they were, I will not ſay, completely obeyed, but in any degree regarded, they would produce a ſyſtem of conduct, and, what is more difficult to preſerve, a diſpoſition of mind, and a regulation of affections, different from any thing to which they had hitherto been accuſtomed, and different from what they would ſee in others. The change and diſtinction of manners, which reſulted from their new character, is perpetually referred to in the letters of their teachers. "And you hath he quickened, who *were* dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, wherein in *times paſt* ye walked, according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience; among whom alſo we all had our converſation in times paſt, in the luſts of our fleſh, fulfilling the deſires of the fleſh, and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."[c] For the *time paſt of our lives* may ſuffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in laſciviouſneſs, luſt, exceſs of wine, reveilings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, *wherein they think it ſtrange that ye run not with them to the ſame exceſs of riot.*"[d] St. Paul, in his firſt letter to the Corinthians, after enumerating, as his manner was, a catalogue of vicious characters, adds, "Such *were* ſome of you, but ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified."[e] In like manner, and alluding to the ſame change of practices and ſentiment, he aſks the Roman Chriſtians what fruit

[a] Acts ii. 49. [b] Acts xii. 12. [c] Eph. ii. 1—3. ſee alſo Tit. iii. 3.
[d] 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. [e] 1 Cor. vi. 11.

fruit they had in thoſe things whereof they are *now* aſhamed ?"[a] The phraſes which the ſame writer employs to deſcribe the moral condition of Chriſtians, compared with their condition before they became Chriſtians, ſuch as "newneſs of life," being "freed from ſin," being "dead to ſin," "the deſtruction of the body of ſin, that, *for the future*, they ſhould not ſerve ſin ;" "children of light and of the day," as oppoſed to "children of darkneſs and of night," "not ſleeping as others," imply, at leaſt, a new ſyſtem of obligation, and, probably, a new ſeries of conduct, commencing with their converſion.

The teſtimony which Pliny bears to the behaviour of the new ſect in his time, and which teſtimony comes not more than fifty years after that of St. Paul, is very applicable to the ſubject under conſideration. The character which this writer gives of the Chriſtians of that age, and which was drawn from a pretty accurate inquiry, becauſe he conſidered their moral principles as the point in which the magiſtrate was intereſted, is as follows :—He tells the emperor, "that ſome of thoſe who had relinquiſhed the ſociety, or who, to ſave themſelves, pretended that they had relinquiſhed it, affirmed that they were wont to meet together, on a ſtated day, before it was light, and ſing among themſelves alternately a hymn to Chriſt as a god ; and to bind themſelves, by an oath, not to the commiſſion of any wickedneſs, but that they would not be guilty of theft or robbery, or adultery ; that they would never falſify their word, nor deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it." This proves that a morality, more pure and ſtrict than was ordinary, prevailed at that time in Chriſtian ſocieties. And to me it appears that we are authoriſed to carry this teſtimony back to the age of the apoſtles, becauſe it is not probable that the immediate hearers and diſciples of Chriſt were more relaxed than their ſucceſſors in Pliny's time, or the miſſionaries of the religion than thoſe whom they taught.

[a] Rom. vi. 21.

## CHAP. VI.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence that many, profeſſing to have been original witneſſes of the Chriſtian miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

WHEN we conſider, firſt, the prevalency of the religion at this hour; ſecondly, the only credible account which can be given of its origin, viz. the activity of the founder and his aſſociates; thirdly, the oppoſition which that activity muſt naturally have excited; fourthly, the fate of the founder of the religion, atteſted by heathen writers as well as our own; fifthly, the teſtimony of the ſame writers to the ſufferings of Chriſtians, either contemporary with, or immediately ſucceeding, the original ſettlers of the inſtitution; ſixthly, predictions of the ſufferings of his followers aſcribed to the founder of the religion, which aſcription alone proves, either that ſuch predictions were delivered and fulfilled, or that the writers of Chriſt's life were induced by the event to attribute ſuch predictions to him; ſeventhly, letters now in our poſſeſſion, written by ſome of the principal agents in the tranſaction, and referring expreſsly to extreme labours, dangers, and ſufferings, ſuſtained by themſelves and their companions; laſtly, a hiſtory, purporting to be written by a fellow-traveller of one of the new teachers, and, by its unſophiſticated correſpondency with letters of that perſon ſtill extant, proving itſelf to be written by ſome one well acquainted with the ſubject of the narrative, which hiſtory contains accounts of travels, perſecutions, and martyrdoms, anſwering to what the former reaſons lead us to expect: when we lay together theſe conſiderations, which, taken ſeparately, are, I think, correctly ſuch as I have ſtated them

them in the preceding chapters, there cannot much doubt remain upon our minds, but that a number of perſons at that time appeared in the world, publickly advancing an extraordinary ſtory, and, for the ſake of propagating the belief of that ſtory, voluntarily incurring great perſonal dangers, traverſing ſeas and kingdoms, exerting great induſtry, and ſuſtaining great extremities of ill uſage and perſecution. It is alſo proved that the ſame perſons, in conſequence of their perſuaſion, or pretended perſuaſion of the truth of what they aſſerted, entered upon a courſe of life in many reſpects new and ſingular.

From the clear and acknowledged parts of the caſe, I think it to be likewiſe in the higheſt degree probable, that the ſtory, for which theſe perſons voluntarily expoſed themſelves to the fatigues and hardſhips which they endured, was a *miraculous* ſtory; I mean that they pretended to miraculous evidence of ſome kind or other. They had nothing elſe to ſtand upon. The deſignation of the perſon, that is to ſay, that Jeſus of Nazareth, rather than any other perſon, was the Meſſiah, and as ſuch, the ſubject of their miniſtry, could only be founded upon ſupernatural tokens attributed to him. Here were no victories, no conqueſts, no revolutions, no ſurpriſing elevation of fortune, no achievements of valour, of ſtrength, or of policy, to appeal to; no diſcoveries in any art or ſcience, no great efforts of genius or learning to produce. A Galilean peaſant was announced to the world as a divine lawgiver. A young man of mean condition, of a private and ſimple life, and who had wrought no deliverance for the Jewiſh nation, was declared to be their Meſſiah. This, without aſcribing to him at the ſame time ſome proofs of his miſſion, (and what other but ſupernatural proofs could there be?) was too abſurd a claim to be either imagined, or attempted, or credited. In whatever degree, or in whatever part, the religion was *argumentative*, when it came to the queſtion, Is the carpenter's ſon of Nazareth the perſon whom we are to receive and obey? there was nothing but the miracles attributed to him, by which his pretenſions could be maintained

tained for a moment. Every controverſy and every queſtion muſt preſuppoſe theſe; for however ſuch controverſies, when they did ariſe, might, and naturally would, be diſcuſſed upon their own grounds of argumentation, without citing the miraculous evidence which had been aſſerted to attend the founder of the religion, (which would have been to enter upon another, and a more general, queſtion) yet we are to bear in mind, that without previouſly ſuppoſing the exiſtence, or the pretence, of ſuch evidence, there could have been no place for the diſcuſſion or the argument at all. Thus, for example, whether the prophecies, which the Jews interpreted to belong to the Meſſiah, were, or were not, applicable to the hiſtory of Jeſus of Nazareth, was a natural ſubject of debate in thoſe times; and the debate would proceed, without recurring at every turn to his miracles, becauſe it ſet out with ſuppoſing theſe; inaſmuch as without miraculous marks and tokens, (real or pretended) or without ſome ſuch great change effected by his means in the public condition of the country, as might have ſatisfied the then received interpretation of theſe prophecies, I do not ſee how the queſtion could ever have been entertained. Apollos, we read, "mightily convinced the Jews, ſhowing by the ſcriptures that Jeſus was Chriſt;" [a] but unleſs Jeſus had exhibited ſome diſtinction of his perſon, ſome proof of ſupernatural power, the argument from the old ſcriptures could have had no place. It had nothing to attach upon. A young man, calling himſelf the ſon of God, gathering a croud about him, and delivering to them lectures of morality, could not have excited ſo much as a doubt amongſt the Jews whether he was the object in whom a long ſeries of ancient prophecies terminated, from the completion of which they had formed ſuch magnificent expectations, and expectations of a nature ſo oppoſite to what appeared; I mean, no ſuch doubt could exiſt when they had the whole caſe before them, when they ſaw him put to death for his officiouſneſs, and when by his death the evidence concerning him was cloſed.

[a] Acts xviii. 28.

ed. Again, the *effect* of the Meſſiah's coming, ſuppoſing Jeſus to have been him, upon Jews, upon Gentiles, upon their relation to each other, upon their acceptance with God, upon their duties and their expectations; his nature, authority, office, and agency; were likely to become ſubjects of much conſideration with the early votaries of the religion, and to occupy their attention and writings. I ſhould not, however, expect, that in theſe diſquiſitions, whether preſerved in the form of letters, ſpeeches, or ſet treatiſes, frequent or very direct mention of his miracles would occur. Still miraculous evidence lay at the bottom of the argument. In the *primary* queſtion, miraculous pretenſions, and miraculous pretenſions alone, were what they had to rely upon.

That the original ſtory was miraculous, is very fairly alſo inferred from the miraculous powers which were laid claim to by the Chriſtians of ſucceeding ages. If the accounts of theſe miracles be true, it was a continuation of the ſame powers; if they be falſe, it was an *imitation*, I will not ſay, of what had been wrought, but of what had been reported to have been wrought, by thoſe who preceded them. That imitation ſhould follow reality; fiction be grafted upon truth; that if miracles were performed at firſt, miracles ſhould be pretended afterwards, agrees ſo well with the ordinary courſe of human affairs, that we can have no great difficulty in believing it. The contrary ſuppoſition is very improbable, namely, that miracles ſhould be pretended to by the followers of the apoſtles and firſt emiſſaries of the religion, when none were pretended to, either in their own perſons or that of their maſter, by theſe apoſtles and emiſſaries themſelves.

## CHAP. VII.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence that many, profeſſing to have been original witneſſes of the Chriſtian miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

IT once then being proved, that the firſt propagators of the Chriſtian inſtitution did exert great activity, and ſubject themſelves to great dangers and ſufferings in conſequence and for the ſake of an extraordinary, and I think we may ſay, of a miraculous ſtory of ſome kind or other; the next great queſtion is, whether the account, which our ſcriptures contain, be that ſtory; that which theſe men delivered, and for which they acted and ſuffered as they did.

This queſtion is, in effect, no other than whether the ſtory, which Chriſtians have *now*, be the ſtory which Chriſtians had *then*; and of this the following proofs may be deduced from general conſiderations, and from conſiderations prior to any inquiry into the particular reaſons and teſtimonies by which the authority of our hiſtories is ſupported.

In the firſt place, there exiſts no trace or veſtige of any other ſtory. It is not, like the death of Cyrus the great, a competition between oppoſite accounts, or between the credit of different hiſtorians. There is not a document, or ſcrap of account, either contemporary with the commencement of Chriſtianity, or extant within many ages after that commencement, which aſſigns a hiſtory ſubſtantially different from ours. The remote, brief, and incidental notices of the affair, which are found in heathen writers ſo far as they do go, go along with us. They bear teſtimony to theſe facts; that the inſtitution originated from Jeſus;

Jeſus; that the founder was put to death, as a maleſactor, at Jeruſalem, by the authority of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate; that the religion nevertheleſs ſpread in that city, and throughout Judea; and that it was propagated from thence to diſtant countries; that the converts were numerous; that they ſuffered great hardſhips and injuries for their profeſſion; and that all this took place in the age of the world which our books have aſſigned. They go on further, to deſcribe the *manners* of Chriſtians in terms perfectly conformable to the accounts extant in our books; that they were wont to aſſemble on a certain day; that they ſung hymns to Chriſt as to a god; that they bound themſelves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to abſtain from theft and adultery, to adhere ſtrictly to their promiſes, and not to deny money depoſited in their hands;[a] that they worſhipped him who was crucified in Paleſtine; that this, their firſt lawgiver, had taught them that they were all brethren; that they had a great contempt for the things of this world, and looked upon them as common; that they flew to one another's relief; that they cheriſhed ſtrong hopes of immortality; that they deſpiſed death, and ſurrendered themſelves to ſufferings."[b] This is the account of writers who viewed the ſubject at a great

[a] Vide Pliny's Letter. Bonnet, in his lively way of expreſſing himſelf, ſays—"Comparing Pliny's Letter with the account in the Acts, it ſeems to me that I had not taken up another author, but that I was ſtill reading the hiſtorian of that extraordinary ſociety." This is ſtrong; but there is undoubtedly an affinity, and all the affinity that could be expected.

[b] "It is incredible what expedition they uſe when any of their friends are known to be in trouble. In a word, they ſpare nothing upon ſuch an occaſion—for theſe miſerable men have no doubt they ſhall be immortal, and live forever, therefore they contemn death, and many ſurrender themſelves to ſufferings. Moreover their firſt lawgiver has taught them that they are all brethren, when once they have turned and renounced the gods of the Greeks, and worſhip the maſter of theirs who was crucified, and engage to live according to his laws. They have alſo a ſovereign contempt for all the things of this world, and look upon them as common." Lucian de Morte Peregrini, t. 1. p. 565. ed. Græv.

great diſtance, who were uninformed and unintereſted about it. It bears the characters of ſuch an account upon the face of it, becauſe it deſcribes effects, namely, the appearance in the world of a new religion, and the converſion of great multitudes to it, without deſcending, in the ſmalleſt degree, to the detail of the tranſaction upon which it was founded, the interior of the inſtitution, the evidence or arguments offered by thoſe who drew over others to it. Yet ſtill here is no contradiction of our ſtory, no other or different ſtory ſet up againſt it, but ſo far a confirmation of it, as that, in the general points upon which the heathen account touches, it agrees with that which we find in our own books.

The ſame may be obſerved of the very few Jewiſh writers, of that and the adjoining period, which have come down to us. Whatever they omit, or whatever difficulties we may find in explaining the omiſſion, they advance no other hiſtory of the tranſaction than that which we acknowledge. Joſephus, who wrote his antiquities, or hiſtory of the Jews, about ſixty years after the commencement of Chriſtianity, in a paſſage generally admitted as genuine, makes mention of John under the name of John the Baptiſt; that he was a preacher of virtue; that he baptized his proſelytes; that he was well received by the people; that he was impriſoned and put to death by Herod; and that Herod lived in a criminal cohabitation with Herodias, his brother's wife.[a] In another paſſage, allowed by many, although not without conſiderable queſtion being moved about it, we hear of "James, the brother of him who was called Jeſus, and of his being put to death."[b] In a third paſſage, extant in every copy that remains of Joſephus's hiſtory, but the authenticity of which has nevertheleſs been long diſputed, we have an explicit teſtimony to the ſubſtance of our hiſtory in theſe words:—"At that time lived Jeſus, a wiſe man, if he may be called a man, for he performed many wonderful works. He was a teacher

[a] Antiq. l. xviii. cap. v. ſect. 1, 2.
[b] Antiq. l. xx. cap. ix. ſect. 1.

a teacher of ſuch men as received the truth with pleaſure. He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. This was the Chriſt; and when Pilate, at the inſtigation of the chief men among us, had condemned him to the croſs, they, who before had conceived an affection for him, did not ceaſe to adhere to him; for on the third day he appeared to them alive again, the divine prophets having foretold theſe and many wonderful things concerning him. And the ſect of the Chriſtians, ſo called from him, ſubſiſts to this time."[a] Whatever becomes of the controverſy concerning the genuineneſs of this paſſage; whether Joſephus go the whole length of our hiſtory, which, if the paſſage be ſincere, he does; or whether he proceed only a very little way with us, which, if the paſſage be rejected, we confeſs to be the caſe; ſtill what we aſſerted is true, that he gives no other or different hiſtory of the ſubject from ours, no other or different account of the original of the inſtitution. And I think alſo that it may with great reaſon be contended, either that the paſſage is genuine, or that the ſilence of Joſephus was deſigned. For, although we ſhould lay aſide the authority of our own books entirely, yet when Tacitus, who wrote not twenty, perhaps not ten, years after Joſephus, in his account of a period in which Joſephus was near thirty years of age, tells us, that a vaſt multitude of Chriſtians were condemned at Rome; that they derived their denomination from Chriſt, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death, as a criminal, by the procurator Pontius Pilate; that the ſuperſtition had ſpread not only over Judea, the ſource of the evil, but had reached Rome alſo: when Suetonius, an hiſtorian contemporary with Tacitus, relates, that in the time of Claudius, the Jews were making diſturbances at Rome, Chreſtus being their leader; and that, during the reign of Nero, the Chriſtians were puniſhed; under both which emperors Joſephus lived: when Pliny, who wrote his celebrated epiſtle not more than thirty years after the publication of Joſephus's hiſtory, found the Chriſtians in

[a] Antiq. l. xviii. cap. iii. ſect. 3.

in ſuch numbers in the province of Bythynia as to draw from him a complaint, that the contagion had ſeized cities, towns, and villages, and had ſo ſeized them as to produce a general deſertion of the public rites; and when, as hath already been obſerved, there is no reaſon for imagining that the Chriſtians were more numerous in Bythynia than in many other parts of the Roman empire: it cannot, I ſhould ſuppoſe, after this, be believed, that the religion, and the tranſaction upon which it was founded, were too obſcure to engage the attention of Joſephus, or to obtain a place in his hiſtory. Perhaps he did not know how to repreſent the buſineſs, and diſpoſed of his difficulties by paſſing it over in ſilence. Euſebius wrote the life of Conſtantine, yet omits entirely the moſt remarkable circumſtance in that life, the death of his ſon Criſpus; undoubtedly for the reaſon here given. The reſerve of Joſephus upon the ſubject of Chriſtianity appears alſo in his paſſing over the baniſhment of the Jews by Claudius, which Suetonius, we have ſeen, has recorded with an expreſs reference to Chriſt. This is at leaſt as remarkable as his ſilence about the infants of Bethlehem.[a] Be, however, the fact, or the cauſe of the omiſſion in Joſephus,[b] what it may, no other or different hiſtory of the ſubject has been given by him, or is pretended to have been given.

But

[a] Michaelis has computed, and, as it ſhould ſeem fairly enough, that probably not more than twenty children periſhed by this cruel precaution. Michael. Introd. to the N. Teſt. tranſlated by Marſh. Vol. I. c. ii. ſect. 11.

[b] There is no notice taken of Chriſtianity in the Miſhna, a collection of Jewiſh traditions compiled about the year 180, although it contains a Tract, "Decultu Peregrino," of ſtrange or idolatrous worſhip; yet it cannot be diſputed but that Chriſtianity was perfectly well known in the world at this time. There is extremely little notice of the ſubject in the Jeruſalem Talmud, compiled about the year 300, and not much more in the Babyloniſh Talmud, of the year 500, although both theſe works are of a religious nature, and although, when the firſt was compiled, Chriſtianity was upon the point of becoming the religion of the ſtate, and, when the letter was publiſhed, had been ſo for 200 years.

But further, the whole ſeries of Chriſtian writers, from the firſt age of the inſtitution down to the preſent, in their diſcuſſions, apologies, arguments, and controverſies, proceed upon the general ſtory which our ſcriptures contain, and upon no other. The main facts, the principal agents, are alike in all. This argument will appear to be of great force, when it is known that we are able to trace back the ſeries of writers to a contact with the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, and to the age of the firſt emiſſaries of the religion, and to deduce it, by an unbroken continuation, from that end of the train to the preſent.

The remaining letters of the apoſtles (and what more original than *their* letters can we have) though written without the remoteſt deſign of tranſmitting the hiſtory of Chriſt, or of Chriſtianity, to future ages, or even of making it known to their contemporaries, incidentally diſcloſe to us the following circumſtances: "Chriſt's deſcent and family, his innocence, the meekneſs and gentleneſs of his character, (a recognition which goes to the whole goſpel hiſtory) his exalted nature, his circumciſion, transfiguration, his life of oppoſition and ſuffering, his patience and reſignation, the appointment of the euchariſt and the manner of it, his agony, his confeſſion before Pontius Pilate, his ſtripes, crucifixion, burial, reſurrection, his appearance after it, firſt to Peter, then to the reſt of the apoſtles, his aſcenſion into heaven, and his deſignation to be the future judge of mankind: the ſtated reſidence of the apoſtles at Jeruſalem, the working of miracles by the firſt preachers of the goſpel, who were alſo the hearers of Chriſt:[a] the ſucceſsful propagation

[a] Heb. ii. 3. "How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect ſo great ſalvation, which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us *by them that heard him*, God alſo bearing them witneſs, both *with ſigns and wonders*, and with *divers miracles*, and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt." I allege this epiſtle without heſitation, for whatever doubts may have been raiſed about its author, there can be none concerning the age in which it was written. No epiſtle in the collection carries about it more indubitable marks of antiquity than this does. It ſpeaks, for inſtance, throughout, of the temple

propagation of the religion, the perſecution of its followers, the miraculous converſion of Paul, miracles wrought by himſelf, and alleged in his controverſies with his adverſaries, and in letters to the perſons amongſt whom they were wrought; finally, *that miracles were the ſigns of an apoſtle.*"[a]

In an epiſtle bearing the name of Barnabas the companion of Paul, probably genuine, certainly belonging to that age, we have the ſufferings of Chriſt, his choice of apoſtles and their number, his paſſion, the ſcarlet robe, the vinegar and gall, the mocking and piercing, the caſting lots for his coat,[b] his reſurrection on the eighth, (i. e. the firſt day of the week[c]) and the commemorative diſtinction of that day, his manifeſtation after his reſurrection, and laſtly, his aſcenſion. We have alſo his miracles, generally but poſitively referred to in the following words: "finally teaching the people of Iſrael, and *doing many wonders and ſigns among them*, he preached to them, and ſhowed the exceeding great love which he bear towards them."[d]

In an epiſtle of Clement, a hearer of St. Paul, although written for a purpoſe remotely connected with the Chriſtian hiſtory, we have the reſurrection of Chriſt, and the ſubſequent miſſion of the apoſtles, recorded in theſe ſatisfactory terms: "The apoſtles have preached to us from our Lord Jeſus Chriſt from God—For having received their command, and being *thoroughly aſſured by the reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, they went abroad, publiſhing that the kingdom of God was at hand."[e] We find noticed alſo, the humility, yet the power of Chriſt,[f] his deſcent from Abraham,

temple as then ſtanding, and of the worſhip of the temple as then ſubſiſting. Heb. viii. 4. "For if he were on earth, he ſhould not be a prieſt, ſeeing there *are* prieſts that offer according to the law." Again, Heb. xiii. 10. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which *ſerve* the tabernacle."

[a] 2 Cor. xii. 12. "Truly, *the ſigns of an apoſtle* were wrought among you in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds."

[b] Ep. Bar. c. vii. [c] Ibid. c. vi. [d] Ep. Bar. c. v.
[e] Ep. Clem. Rom. c. xlii. [f] Ib. c. xvi.

Abraham, his crucifixion. We have Peter and Paul repreſented as faithful and righteous pillars of the church, the numerous ſufferings of Peter, the bonds, ſtripes, and ſtoning of Paul, and more particularly, his extenſive and unwearied travels.

In an epiſtle of Polycarp, a diſciple of St. John, though only a brief hortatory letter, we have the humility, patience, ſufferings, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of Chriſt, together with the apoſtolic character of St. Paul diſtinctly recognized.[a] Of this ſame father we are alſo aſſured by Irenæus, that he (Irenæus) had heard him relate, "what he had received from eye-witneſſes concerning the Lord, both *concerning his miracles* and his doctrine."[b]

In the remaining works of Ignatius, the contemporary of Polycarp, larger than thoſe of Polycarp, (yet, like thoſe of Polycarp, treating of ſubjects in no wiſe leading to any recital of the Chriſtian hiſtory) the occaſional alluſions are proportionably more copious. The deſcent of Chriſt from David, his mother Mary, his miraculous conception, the ſtar at his birth, his baptiſm by John, the reaſon aſſigned for it, his appeal to the prophets, the ointment poured on his head, his ſufferings under Pontius Pilate and Herod the tetrarch, his reſurrection, the Lord's day called and kept in commemoration of it, and the euchariſt, in both its parts, are unequivocally referred to. Upon the reſurrection this writer is even circumſtantial. He mentions the apoſtles eating and drinking with Chriſt after he was riſen, their feeling and their handling him; from which laſt circumſtance Ignatius raiſes this juſt reflection—"They believed, being convinced both by his fleſh and ſpirit; for this cauſe they deſpiſed death, and were found to be above it."[c]

Quadratus, of the ſame age with Ignatius, has left us the following noble teſtimony:—"The works of our Saviour were always conſpicuous, for they were real:



[a] Pol. Ep. ad Phil. c. v. viii. ii. iii.
[b] Ir. ad Flor. ap. Euſ. l. v. c. 20.
[c] Ad. Smyr. c. iii.

both they that were healed, and they that were raiſed from the dead: who were ſeen not only when they were healed or raiſed, but for a long time afterwards. Not only whilſt he dwelled on this earth, but alſo after his departure, and for a good while after it, inſomuch that ſome of them have reached to our times."[a]

Juſtin Martyr came little more than thirty years after Quadratus. From Juſtin's works, which are ſtill extant, might be collected a tolerably complete account of Chriſt's life, in all points agreeing with that which is delivered in our ſcriptures; taken indeed, in a great meaſure, from thoſe ſcriptures, but ſtill proving that this account, and no other, was the account known and extant in that age. The miracles in particular, which form the part of Chriſt's hiſtory moſt material to be traced, ſtand fully and diſtinctly recognized in the following paſſage:—"He healed thoſe who had been blind, and deaf, and lame, from their birth, cauſing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to ſee; and by raiſing the dead, and making them to live, he induced, by his works, the men of that age to know him."[b]

It is unneceſſary to carry theſe citations lower, becauſe the hiſtory, after this time, occurs in ancient Chriſtian writings as familiarly as it is wont to do in modern ſermons; occurs always the ſame in ſubſtance, and always that which our evangeliſts repreſent.

This is not only true of thoſe writings of Chriſtians which are genuine, and of acknowledged authority, but it is, in a great meaſure, true of all their ancient writings which remain; although ſome of theſe may have been erroneouſly aſcribed to authors to whom they did not belong, or may contain falſe accounts, or may appear to be undeſerving of credit, or never indeed to have obtained any. Whatever fables they have mixed with the narrative, they preſerve the material parts, the leading facts, as we have them; and, ſo far as they do this, although they be evidence of nothing

[a] Ap. Euſ. H. E. l. iv. c. 3.
[b] Juſt. dial. cum Tryph. p. 288. ed. Thirl.

ing elſe, they are evidence that theſe points were *fixed*, were received and acknowledged by all Chriſtians in the ages in which the books were written. At leaſt it may be aſſerted, that, in the places where we were moſt likely to meet with ſuch things, if ſuch things had exiſted, no relics appear of any ſtory ſubſtantially different from the preſent, as the cauſe, or as the pretence of the inſtitution.

Now that the original ſtory, the ſtory delivered by the firſt preachers of the inſtitution, ſhould have died away ſo entirely as to have left no record or memorial of its exiſtence, although ſo many records and memorials of the time and tranſaction remain ; and that another ſtory ſhould have ſtepped into its place, and gained excluſive poſſeſſion of the belief of all who profeſſed themſelves diſciples of the inſtitution, is beyond any example of the corruption of even oral tradition, and ſtill leſs conſiſtent with the experience of written hiſtory : and this improbability, which is very great, is rendered ſtill greater by the reflection, that no ſuch *change*, as the oblivion of one ſtory and the ſubſtitution of another, took place in any future period of the Chriſtian era. Chriſtianity has travelled through dark and turbulent ages ; nevertheleſs it came out of the cloud and the ſtorm ſuch, in ſubſtance, as it entered in. Many additions were made to the primitive hiſtory, and theſe entitled to different degrees of credit ; many doctrinal errors alſo were from time to time grafted into the public creed, but ſtill the original ſtory remained, and remained the ſame. In all its principal parts it has been fixed from the beginning.

Thirdly, the religious rites and uſages that prevailed amongſt the early diſciples of Chriſtianity were ſuch as belonged to, and ſprung out of, the narrative now in our hands ; which accordancy ſhows, that it was the narrative upon which theſe perſons acted and which they had received from their teachers. Our account makes the founder of the religion direct that his diſciples ſhould be baptized : We know that the firſt Chriſtians were baptized. Our account makes him direct that they ſhould hold religious aſſemblies ;

aſſemblies: We find that they did hold religious aſſemblies. Our accounts make the apoſtles aſſemble upon a ſtated day in the week: We find, and that from information perfectly independent of our accounts, that the Chriſtians of the firſt century did obſerve ſtated days of aſſembling. Our hiſtories record the inſtitution of the rite which we call the Lord's ſupper, and a command to repeat it in perpetual ſucceſſion: We find, amongſt the early Chriſtians, the celebration of this rite univerſal. And indeed we find concurring in all the above-mentioned obſervances, Chriſtian ſocieties of many different nations and languages, removed from one another by great diſtance of place and diſſimilitude of ſituation. It is alſo extremely material to remark, that there is no room for inſinuating that our books were fabricated with a ſtudious accommodation to the uſages which obtained at the time they were written; that the authors of the books found the uſages eſtabliſhed, and framed the ſtory to account for their original. The ſcripture accounts, eſpecially of the Lord's ſupper, are too ſhort and curſory, not to ſay too obſcure, and, in this view, deficient, to allow a place for any ſuch ſuſpicion.[a]

Amongſt the proofs of the truth of our propoſition, viz. that the ſtory, which we have *now*, is, in ſubſtance, the ſtory which the Chriſtians had *then*, or, in other words, that the accounts in our goſpels are, as to their principal parts at leaſt, the accounts which the apoſtles and original teachers of the religion delivered, one ariſes from obſerving, that it appears by the goſpels themſelves, that the ſtory was public at the time; that the Chriſtian community was already in poſſeſſion of the ſubſtance and principal parts of the narrative. The goſpels were not the original cauſe of the Chriſtian hiſtory being believed, but were themſelves among the conſequences of that belief. This is

[a] The reader who is converſant in theſe reſearches, by comparing the ſhort ſcripture accounts of the Chriſtian rites abovementioned with the minute and circumſtantial directions contained in the pretended apoſtolical conſtitutions, will ſee the force of this obſervation; the difference between truth and forgery.

is expreſsly affirmed by St. Luke in his brief, but, as I think, very important and inſtructive preface. "Foraſmuch (ſays the evangeliſt) as many have taken in hand to ſet forth in order a declaration of thoſe things *which are moſt ſurely believed amongſt us, even as they delivered them unto us, which, from the beginning, were eye-witneſſes and miniſters of the word;* it ſeemed good to me alſo, having had perfect underſtanding of all things from the very firſt, to write unto thee in order, moſt excellent Theophilus, that thou mighteſt know the certainty of thoſe things *wherein thou haſt been inſtructed.*" This ſhort introduction teſtifies, that the ſubſtance of the hiſtory, which the evangeliſt was about to write, was already believed by Chriſtians; that it was believed upon the declarations of eye-witneſſes and miniſters of the word; that it formed the account of their religion, in which Chriſtians were inſtructed; that the office which the hiſtorian propoſed to himſelf, was to trace each particular to its origin, and to fix the certainty of many things which the reader had before heard of. In St. John's goſpel, the ſame point appears from hence, that there are ſome principal facts, to which the hiſtorian refers, but which he does not relate. A remarkable inſtance of this kind is the *aſcenſion*, which is not mentioned by St. John in its place, at the concluſion of his hiſtory, but which is plainly referred to in the following words of the ſixth chapter :[a] "What and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of man aſcend up where he was before." And ſtill more poſitively in the words which Chriſt, according to our evangeliſt, ſpoke to Mary after his reſurrection, "Touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended to my Father; but go unto my brethren, and ſay unto them, I aſcend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God."[b] This can only be accounted for by the ſuppoſition, that St. John wrote under a ſenſe of the notoriety of Chriſt's aſcenſion, amongſt thoſe by whom his book was likely to be read. The ſame account muſt alſo be given of St. Matthew's omiſſion of the ſame important fact. The thing



[a] Alſo John iii. 13. and xvi. 28. [b] John xx. 17.

was very well known, and it did not occur to the hiſtorian, that it was neceſſary to add any particulars concerning it. It agrees alſo with this ſolution, and with no other, that neither Matthew nor John diſpoſe of the perſon of our Lord in any manner whatever. Other intimations in St. John's goſpel of the then general notoriety of the ſtory, are the following: His manner of introducing his narrative, (ch. i. v. 15.) "John bare witneſs of him, and cried, ſaying," evidently preſuppoſes that his readers knew who John was. His rapid parenthetical reference to John's impriſonment, "for John was not yet caſt into priſon,"[a] could only come from a writer whoſe mind was in the habit of conſidering John's impriſonment as perfectly notorious. The deſcription of Andrew by the addition "Simon Peter's brother,"[b] takes it for granted that Simon Peter was well known: his name had not been mentioned before. The evangeliſt's noticing[c] the prevailing miſconſtruction of a diſcourſe, which Chriſt held with the beloved diſciple, proves that the characters and the diſcourſe were already public. And the obſervation which theſe inſtances afford, is of equal validity for the purpoſe of the preſent argument, whoever was the author of the hiſtories.

Theſe four circumſtances—firſt, the recognition of the account in its principal parts by a ſeries of ſucceeding writers; ſecondly, the total abſence of any account of the origin of the religion ſubſtantially different from ours; thirdly, the early and extenſive prevalence of rites and inſtitutions, which reſult from our account; fourthly, our account bearing in its conſtruction proof that it is an account of facts, which were known and believed at the time; are ſufficient, I conceive, to ſupport an aſſurance, that the ſtory, which we have now, is, in general, the ſtory which Chriſtians had at the beginning. I ſay *in general*; by which term I mean, that it is the ſame in its texture, and in its principal facts. For inſtance, I make no doubt, for the reaſons above ſtated, but that the reſurrection

[a] John iii. 24. [b] Ibid. i. 40. [c] John xxi. 24.

tion of the founder of the religion was always a part of the Chriſtian ſtory. Nor can a doubt of this remain upon the mind of any one, who reflects that the reſurrection is, in ſome form or other, aſſerted, referred to, or aſſumed, in every Chriſtian writing, of every deſcription, which hath come down to us.

And if our evidence ſtopped here, we ſhould have a ſtrong caſe to offer: For we ſhould have to allege, that, in the reign of Tiberius Cæſar, a certain number of perſons ſet about an attempt of eſtabliſhing a new religion in the world; in the proſecution of which purpoſe, they voluntarily encountered great dangers, undertook great labours, ſuſtained great ſufferings, all *for* a miraculous ſtory which they publiſhed whereever they came; and that the reſurrection of a dead man, whom, during his life, they had followed and accompanied, was a conſtant part of this ſtory. I know nothing in the above ſtatement which can, with any appearance of reaſon, be diſputed; and I know nothing in the hiſtory of the human ſpecies ſimilar to it.

## CHAP. VIII.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence that many perſons, profeſſing to have been original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

THAT the ſtory, which we have now, is, in the main, the ſtory which the apoſtles publiſhed, is, I think, nearly certain from the conſiderations which have been propoſed. But whether, when we come to the particulars and the detail of the narrative, the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament be deſerving of credit as hiſtories, ſo that a fact ought

ought to be accounted true becauſe it is found in them; or whether they are entitled to be conſidered as repreſenting the accounts, which, true or falſe, the apoſtles publiſhed; whether their authority, in either of theſe views, can be truſted to, is a point which neceſſarily depends upon what we know of the books, and of their authors.

Now, in treating of this part of our argument, the firſt, and a moſt material obſervation upon the ſubject is, that, ſuch was the ſituation of the authors to whom the four goſpels are aſcribed, that, if any one of the four be genuine, it is ſufficient for our purpoſe. The received author of the firſt was an original apoſtle and emiſſary of the religion. The received author of the ſecond was an inhabitant of Jeruſalem at the time, to whoſe houſe the apoſtles were wont to reſort, and himſelf an attendant upon one of the moſt eminent of that number. The received author of the third was a ſtated companion and fellow-traveller of the moſt active of all the teachers of the religion, and in the courſe of his travels frequently in the ſociety of the orignal apoſtles. The received author of the fourth, as well as of the firſt, was one of theſe apoſtles. No ſtronger evidence of the truth of a hiſtory can ariſe from the ſituation of the hiſtorian than what is here offered. The authors of all the hiſtories lived at the time and upon the ſpot. The authors of two of the hiſtories were preſent at many of the ſcenes which they deſcribe; eye-witneſſes of the facts, ear-witneſſes of the diſcourſes; writing from perſonal knowledge and recollection, and, what ſtrengthens their teſtimony, writing upon a ſubject in which their minds were deeply engaged, and in which, as they muſt have been very frequently repeating the accounts to others, the paſſages of the hiſtory would be kept continually alive in their memory. Whoever reads the goſpels (and they ought to be read for this particular purpoſe) will find in them not merely a general affirmation of miraculous powers, but detailed circumſtantial accounts of miracles, with ſpecifications of time, place and perſons; and theſe accounts many and various. In the

goſpels,

goſpels, therefore, which bear the names of Matthew and John, theſe narratives, if they really proceeded from theſe men, muſt either be true, as far as the fidelity of human recollection is uſually to be depended upon, that is, muſt be true in ſubſtance, and in their principal parts, (which is ſufficient for the purpoſe of proving a ſupernatural agency) or they muſt be wilful and meditated falſehoods. Yet the writers who fabricated and uttered theſe falſehoods, if they be ſuch, are of the number of thoſe who, unleſs the whole contexture of the Chriſtian ſtory be a dream, ſacrificed their eaſe and ſafety in the cauſe, and for a purpoſe the moſt inconſiſtent that is poſſible with diſhoneſt intentions. They were villains for no end but to teach honeſty, and martyrs without the leaſt proſpect of honour or advantage.

The goſpels which bear the name of Mark and Luke, although not the narratives of eye-witneſſes, are, if genuine, removed from that only by one degree. They are the narratives of contemporary writers, of writers themſelves mixing with the buſineſs, one of the two probably living in the place which was the principal ſcene of action, both living in habits of ſociety and correſpondence with thoſe who had been preſent at the tranſactions which they relate. The latter of them accordingly tells us, (and with apparent ſincerity, becauſe he tells it without pretending to perſonal knowledge, and without claiming for his work greater authority than belonged to it) that the things which were believed amongſt Chriſtians came from thoſe who from the beginning were eye-witneſſes and miniſters of the word; that he had traced up accounts to their ſource; and that he was prepared to inſtruct his reader in the certainty of the things which he related."[a] Very few

[a] Why ſhould not the candid and modeſt preface of this hiſtorian be believed as well as that which Dion Caſſius prefixes to his life of Commodus. "Theſe things and the following I write not from the report of others, but from my own knowledge and obſervation." I ſee no reaſon to doubt but that both paſſages deſcribe truly enough the ſituation of the authors.

few hiſtories lie ſo cloſe to their facts; very few hiſtorians are ſo nearly connected with the ſubject of their narrative, or poſſeſs ſuch means of authentic information as theſe.

The ſituation of the writers applies to the truth of the facts which they record. But at preſent we uſe their teſtimony to a point ſomewhat ſhort of this, namely, that the facts recorded in the goſpels, whether true or falſe, are the facts, and the ſort of facts, which the original preachers of the religion alleged. Strictly ſpeaking, I am concerned only to ſhow, that what the goſpels contain is the ſame as what the apoſtles preached. Now how ſtands the proof of this point? A ſet of men went about the world publiſhing a ſtory compoſed of miraculous accounts (for miraculous from the very nature and exigency of the caſe they muſt have been) and, upon the ſtrength of theſe accounts, called upon mankind to quit the religions in which they had been educated, and to take up, from thenceforth, a new ſyſtem of opinions, and new rules of action. What is more, in atteſtation of theſe accounts, that is, in ſupport of an inſtitution of which theſe accounts were the foundation, the ſame men voluntarily expoſed themſelves to harraſſing and perpetual labours, dangers and ſufferings. We want to know what theſe accounts were. We have the particulars, i. e. many particulars, from two of their own number. We have them from an attendant of one of the number, and who there is reaſon to believe was an inhabitant of Jeruſalem at the time. We have them from a fourth writer, who accompanied the moſt laborious miſſionary of the inſtitution in his travels; who, in the courſe of theſe travels, was frequently brought into the ſociety of the reſt; and who, let it be obſerved, begins his narrative by telling us, that he is about to relate the things which had been delivered by thoſe who were miniſters of the word, and eye-witneſſes of the fact. I do not know what information can be more ſatisfactory than this. We may, perhaps, perceive the force and value of it more ſenſibly, if we reflect how requiring we

ſhould

ſhould have been if we had wanted it. Suppoſing it to be ſufficiently proved, that the religion, now profeſſed amongſt us, owed its original to the preaching and miniſtry of a number of men, who, about eighteen centuries ago, ſet forth in the world a new ſyſtem of religious opinions, founded upon certain extraordinary things which they related of a wonderful perſon who had appeared in Judea: ſuppoſe it to be alſo ſufficiently proved, that, in the courſe and proſecution of their miniſtry, theſe men had ſubjected themſelves to extreme hardſhips, fatigue, and peril; but ſuppoſe the accounts which they publiſhed had not been committed to writing till ſome ages after their times, or at leaſt that no hiſtories, but what had been compoſed ſome ages afterwards, had reached our hands; we ſhould have ſaid, and with reaſon, that we were willing to believe theſe men under the circumſtances in which they delivered their teſtimony, but that we did not, at this day, know with ſufficient evidence what their teſtimony was. Had we received the particulars of it from any of their own number, from any of thoſe who lived and converſed with them, from any of their hearers, or even from any of their contemporaries, we ſhould have had ſomething to rely upon. Now, if our books be genuine, we have all theſe. We have the very ſpecies of information which, as it appears to me, our imagination would have carved out for us, if it had been wanting.

But I have ſaid, that, if any one of the four goſpels be genuine, we have not only direct hiſtorical teſtimony to the point we contend for, but teſtimony which, ſo far as that point is concerned, cannot reaſonably be rejected. If the firſt goſpel was really written by Matthew, we have the narrative of one of the number from which to judge what were the miracles, and the kind of miracles, which the apoſtles attributed to Jeſus. Although, for argument's ſake, and only for argument's ſake, we ſhould allow that this goſpel had been erroneouſly aſcribed to Matthew, yet if the goſpel of St. John be genuine, the obſervation holds with no leſs ſtrength. Again, although the goſpels both

of

of Matthew and John could be ſuppoſed to be ſpurious, yet, if the goſpel of St. Luke was truly the compoſition of that perſon, or of any perſon, be his name what it might, who was actually in the ſituation in which the author of that goſpel profeſſes himſelf to have been; or if the goſpel which bears the name of Mark really proceeded from him; we ſtill, even upon the loweſt ſuppoſition, poſſeſs the accounts of one writer at leaſt, who was not only contemporary with the apoſtles, but aſſociated with them in their miniſtry; which authority ſeems ſufficient, when the queſtion is ſimply what it was which theſe apoſtles advanced.

I think it material to have this well noticed. The New Teſtament contains a great number of diſtinct writings, the genuineneſs of any one of which is almoſt ſufficient to prove the truth of the religion: it contains, however, four diſtinct hiſtories, the genuineneſs of any one of which is perfectly ſufficient. If, therefore, we muſt be conſidered as encountering the riſk of error in aſſigning the authors of our books, we are entitled to the advantage of ſo many ſeparate probabilities. And although it ſhould appear that ſome of the evangeliſts had ſeen and uſed each other's works, this diſcovery, whilſt it ſubtracts indeed from their character as teſtimonies ſtrictly independent, diminiſhes, I conceive, little, either their ſeparate authority, by which I mean the authority of any one that is genuine, or their mutual confirmation. For let the moſt diſadvantageous ſuppoſition poſſible be made concerning them; let it be allowed, what I ſhould have no great difficulty in admitting, that Mark compiled his hiſtory almoſt entirely from thoſe of Matthew and Luke; and let it alſo, for a moment, be ſuppoſed, that theſe hiſtories were not, in fact, written by Matthew and Luke; yet if it be true that Mark, a contemporary of the apoſtles, living in habits of ſociety with the apoſtles, a fellow-traveller and fellow-labourer with ſome of them; if, I ſay, it be true that this perſon made the compilation, it follows, that the writings from which he made it exiſted in the times of the apoſtles,

tles, and not only ſo, but that they were then in ſuch eſteem and credit that a companion of the apoſtles formed a hiſtory out of them. Let the goſpel of Mark be called an epitome of that of Matthew; if a perſon in the ſituation in which Mark is deſcribed to have been, actually made the epitome, it affords the ſtrongeſt poſſible atteſtation to the character of the original. Again, paralleliſms in ſentences, in words, and in the order of words, have been traced out between the goſpel of Matthew and that of Luke; which concurrence cannot eaſily be explained otherwiſe than by ſuppoſing, either that Luke had conſulted Matthew's hiſtory, or, what appears to me in no wiſe incredible, that minutes of ſome of Chriſt's diſcourſes, as well as brief memoirs of ſome paſſages of his life, had been committed to writing at the time, and that ſuch written accounts had by both authors been occaſionally admitted into their hiſtories. Either ſuppoſition is perfectly conſiſtent with the acknowledged formation of St. Luke's narrative, who profeſſes not to write as an eye-witneſs, but to have inveſtigated the original of every account which he delivers; in other words, to have collected them from ſuch documents and teſtimonies as he, who had the beſt opportunities of making inquiries, judged to be authentic. Therefore, allowing that this writer alſo, in ſome inſtances, borrowed from the goſpel which we call Matthew's, and once more allowing, for the ſake of ſtating the argument, that that goſpel was not the production of the author to whom we aſcribe it, yet ſtill we have, in St. Luke's goſpel, a hiſtory given by a writer immediately connected with the tranſaction, with the witneſſes of it, with the perſons engaged in it, and compoſed from materials which that perſon, thus ſituated, deemed to be ſafe ſources of intelligence: in other words, whatever ſuppoſition be made concerning any or all the other goſpels, if St. Luke's goſpel be genuine, we have in it a credible evidence of the point which we maintain. The goſpel according to St. John appears to be, and is on all hands allowed to be, an independent teſtimony, ſtrictly and properly ſo called. Notwithſtanding,

ing, therefore, any connexion, or ſuppoſed connexion, between ſome of the goſpels, I again repeat, what I before ſaid, that, if any one of the four be genuine, we have in that one, ſtrong reaſon from the character and ſituation of the writer to believe, that we poſſeſs the accounts which the original emiſſaries of the religion delivered.

II. In treating of the written evidences of Chriſtianity, next to their ſeparate, we are to conſider their aggregate authority. Now there is in the evangelic hiſtory a cumulation of teſtimony which belongs hardly to any other, but which our habitual mode of reading the ſcriptures ſometimes cauſes us to overlook. When a paſſage, in any wiſe relating to the hiſtory of Chriſt, is read to us out of the epiſtle of Clemens Romanus, the epiſtles of Ignatius, of Polycarp, or from any other writing of that age, we are immediately ſenſible of the confirmation which it affords to the ſcripture account. Here is a new witneſs. Now if we had been accuſtomed to read the goſpel of Matthew alone, and had known that of Luke only as the generality of Chriſtians know the writings of the apoſtolical fathers, that is, had known that ſuch a writing was extant and acknowledged; when we came, for the firſt time, to look into what it contained, and found many of the facts which Matthew recorded, recorded alſo there, many other facts of a ſimilar nature added, and throughout the whole work the ſame general ſeries of tranſactions ſtated, and the ſame general character of the perſon who was the ſubject of the hiſtory preſerved, I apprehend that we ſhould feel our minds ſtrongly impreſſed by this diſcovery of freſh evidence. We ſhould feel a renewal of the ſame ſentiment in firſt reading the goſpel of St. John. That of St. Mark perhaps would ſtrike us as an abridgment of the hiſtory with which we were already acquainted; but we ſhould naturally reflect, that, if that hiſtory was abridged by ſuch a perſon as Mark, or by any perſon of ſo early an age, it afforded one of the higheſt poſſible atteſtations of the value of the work. This ſucceſſive diſcloſure of proof would leave us aſſured, that there muſt have been at leaſt ſome

reality

reality in a ſtory which, not one, but many, had taken in hand to commit to writing. The very exiſtence of four ſeparate hiſtories would ſatisfy us that the ſubject had a foundation; and when, amidſt the variety which the different information of the different writers had ſupplied to their accounts, or which their different choice and judgment in ſelecting their materials had produced, we obſerved many facts to ſtand the ſame in all; of theſe facts, at leaſt, we ſhould conclude, that they were fixed in their credit and publicity. If, after this, we ſhould come to the knowledge of a diſtinct hiſtory, and that alſo of the ſame age with the reſt, taking up the ſubject where the others had left it, and carrying on a narrative of the effects produced in the world by the extraordinary cauſes of which we had already been informed, and which effects ſubſiſt at this day, we ſhould think the reality of the original ſtory in no little degree eſtabliſhed by this ſupplement. If ſubſequent inquiries ſhould bring to our knowledge, one after another, letters written by ſome of the principal agents in the buſineſs, upon the buſineſs, and during the time of their activity and concern in it, aſſuming all along and recognizing the original ſtory, agitating the queſtions that aroſe out of it, preſſing the obligations which reſulted from it, giving advice and directions to thoſe who acted upon it, I conceive that we ſhould find, in every one of theſe, a ſtill further ſupport to the concluſion we had formed. At preſent the weight of this ſucceſſive confirmation is, in a great meaſure unperceived by us. The evidence does not appear to us what it is; for, being from our infancy accuſtomed to regard the New Teſtament as one book, we ſee in it only one teſtimony. The whole occurs to us as a ſingle evidence; and its different parts, not as diſtinct atteſtations, but as different portions only of the ſame. Yet in this conception of the ſubject we are certainly miſtaken; for the very diſcrepancies amongſt the ſeveral documents which form our volume prove, if all other proof was wanting, that in their original compoſition

they

they were ſeparate, and moſt of them independent productions.

If we diſpoſe our ideas in a different order, the matter ſtands thus :—Whilſt the tranſaction was recent, and the original witneſſes were at hand to relate it; and whilſt the apoſtles were buſied in preaching and travelling, in collecting diſciples, in forming and regulating ſocieties of converts, in ſupporting themſelves againſt oppoſition; whilſt they excerciſed their miniſtry under the harraſſings of frequent perſecution, and in a ſtate of almoſt continual alarm, it is not probable that, in this engaged, anxious, and unſettled condition of life, they would think immediately of writing hiſtories for the information of the public or of poſterity.[a] But it is very probable that emergencies might draw, from ſome of them, occaſional letters upon the ſubject of their miſſion to converts, or to ſocieties of converts, with which they were connected; or that they might addreſs written diſcourſes and exhortations to the diſciples of the inſtitution at large, which would be received and read with a reſpect proportioned to the character of the writer. Accounts in the mean time would get abroad of the extraordinary things that had been paſſing, written with different degrees of information and correctneſs. The extenſion of the Chriſtian ſociety, which could no longer be inſtructed by a perſonal intercourſe with the apoſtles, and the poſſible circulation of imperfect or erroneous narratives, would ſoon teach ſome amongſt them the expediency of ſending forth authentic memoirs of the life and doctrine of their Maſter. When accounts appeared, authorized by the name, and credit, and ſituation of the writers, recommended or recognized by the apoſtles and firſt preachers of the religion, or found to coincide with what the apoſtles and firſt preachers

[a] This thought occurred to Euſebius—" Nor were the apoſtles of Chriſt greatly concerned about the writing of books, being engaged in a more excellent miniſtry, which is above all human power." Ecc. Hiſt. l. iii. c. 24. The ſame conſideration accounts alſo for the paucity of Chriſtian writings in the firſt century of its era.

preachers of the religion had taught, other accounts would fall into diſuſe and neglect; whilſt theſe, maintaining their reputation (as, if genuine and well founded, they would do) under the teſt of time, inquiry, and contradiction, might be expected to make their way into the hands of Chriſtians of all countries of the world. This ſeems the natural progreſs of the buſineſs; and with this the records in our poſſeſſion, and the evidence concerning them, correſpond. We have remaining, in the firſt place, many letters of the kind above deſcribed, which have been preſerved with a care and fidelity anſwering to the reſpect with which we may ſuppoſe that ſuch letters would be received. But as theſe letters were not written to prove the truth of the Chriſtian religion, in the ſenſe in which we regard that queſtion, nor to convey information of facts, of which thoſe to whom the letters were written had been previouſly informed; we are not to look in them for any thing more than incidental alluſions to the Chriſtian hiſtory. We are able, however, to gather from theſe documents various particular atteſtations which have been already enumerated; and this is a ſpecies of written evidence, as far as it goes, in the higheſt degree ſatisfactory, and in point of time perhaps the firſt. But for our more circumſtantial information we have, in the next place, five direct *hiſtories*, bearing the names of perſons acquainted, by their ſituation, with the truth of what they relate, and three of them purporting, in the very body of the narrative, to be written by ſuch perſons: of which books we know that ſome were in the hands of thoſe who were contemporaries of the apoſtles, and that, in the age immediately poſterior to that, they were in the hands, we may ſay, of every one, and received by Chriſtians with ſo much reſpect and deference, as to be conſtantly quoted and referred to by them without any doubt of the truth of their accounts. They were treated as ſuch hiſtories, proceeding from ſuch authorities, might expect to be treated. In the preface to one of our hiſtories we have intimations left us of the exiſtence of ſome ancient accounts which are now loſt. There

is nothing in this circumſtance that can ſurpriſe us. It was to be expected from the magnitude and novelty of the occaſion that ſuch accounts would *ſwarm*. When better accounts came forth, theſe died away. Our preſent hiſtories ſuperſeded others. They ſoon acquired a character and eſtabliſhed a reputation which does not appear to have belonged to any other: that, at leaſt, can be proved concerning them, which cannot be proved concerning any other.

But to return to the point which led to theſe reflections. By conſidering our records in either of the two views in which we have repreſented them, we ſhall perceive that we poſſeſs a *collection of proofs*, and not a naked or ſolitary teſtimony; and that the written evidence is of ſuch a kind, and comes to us in ſuch a ſtate, as the natural order and progreſs of things, in the infancy of the inſtitution, might be expected to produce.

Thirdly. The genuineneſs of the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament is undoubtedly a point of importance, becauſe the ſtrength of their evidence is augmented by our knowledge of the ſituation of their authors, their relation to the ſubject, and the part which they ſuſtained in the tranſaction; and the teſtimonies which we are able to produce compoſe a firm ground of perſuaſion that the goſpels were written by the perſons whoſe names they bear. Nevertheleſs I muſt be allowed to ſtate, that, to the argument which I am endeavouring to maintain, this point is not eſſential; I mean, ſo eſſential as that the fate of the argument depends upon it. The queſtion before us is, whether the goſpels exhibit the ſtory which the apoſtles and firſt emiſſaries of the religion publiſhed; and *for* which they acted and ſuffered in the manner, in which, for ſome miraculous ſtory or other, they did act and ſuffer. Now let us ſuppoſe that we poſſeſſed no other information concerning theſe books than that they were written by early diſciples of Chriſtianity; that they were known and read during the time, or near the time, of the original apoſtles of the religion; that by Chriſtians whom the

apoſtles

apoſtles inſtructed, by ſocieties of Chriſtians which the apoſtles founded, theſe books were *received*, (by which term "received," I mean that they were believed to contain authentic accounts of the tranſaction upon which the religion reſted, and accounts which were accordingly uſed, repeated, and relied upon) this reception would be a valid proof that theſe books, whoever were the authors of them, muſt have accorded with what the apoſtles taught. A reception by the firſt race of Chriſtians, is evidence that they agreed with what the firſt teachers of the religion delivered. In particular, if they had not agreed with what the apoſtles themſelves preached, how could they have gained credit in churches and ſocieties which the apoſtles eſtabliſhed?

Now the fact of their early exiſtence, and not only of their exiſtence but their reputation, is made out by ſome ancient teſtimonies which do not happen to ſpecify the names of the writers: add to which, what hath been already hinted, that two out of the four goſpels contain averments in the body of the hiſtory, which, though they do not diſcloſe the names, fix the time and ſituation of the authors, viz. that one was written by an eye-witneſs of the ſufferings of Chriſt, the other by a contemporary of the apoſtles. In the goſpel of St. John, (xix. 35) after deſcribing the crucifixion, with the particular circumſtance of piercing Chriſt's ſide with a ſpear, the hiſtorian adds, as from himſelf, "and he that ſaw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he ſaith true, that ye might believe." Again, (xxi. 24) after relating a converſation which paſſed between Peter and the diſciple, as it is there expreſſed, whom Jeſus loved, it is added, "this is the diſciple which teſtifieth of theſe things and wrote theſe things." This teſtimony, let it be remarked, is not the leſs worthy of regard, becauſe it is in one view imperfect. The name is not mentioned, which, if a fraudulent purpoſe had been intended, would have been done. The third of our preſent goſpels purports to have been written by the perſon who wrote the Acts of the Apoſtles;

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in which latter hiſtory, or rather latter part of the ſame hiſtory, the author, by uſing in various places the firſt perſon plural, declares himſelf to have been a contemporary of all, and a companion of one of the original preachers of the religion.

## CHAP. IX.

*There is ſatisfactory evidence that many perſons, profeſſing to be original witneſſes of the Chriſtian Miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.*

### "Of the authenticity of the ſcriptures."

NOT forgetting, therefore, what credit is due to the evangelic hiſtory, ſuppoſing even any one of the four goſpels to be genuine; what credit is due to the goſpels, even ſuppoſing nothing to be known concerning them but that they were written by early diſciples of the religion, and received with deference by early Chriſtian churches; more eſpecially not forgetting what credit is due to the New Teſtament in its capacity of *cumulative* evidence; we now proceed to ſtate the proper and diſtinct proofs, which ſhow not only the general value of theſe records, but their ſpecific authority, and the high probability there is that they actually came from the perſons whoſe names they bear.

There are, however, a few preliminary reflections, by which we may draw up with more regularity to the propoſitions, upon which the cloſe and particular diſcuſſion of the ſubject depends. Of which nature are the following:

I. We are able to produce a great number of ancient *manuſcripts*, found in many different countries, and in countries widely diſtant from each other, all of them anterior

terior to the art of printing, ſome certainly ſeven or eight hundred years old, and ſome which have been preſerved probably above a thouſand years.[a] We have alſo many ancient *verſions* of theſe books, and ſome of them into languages which are not at preſent, nor for many ages have been, ſpoken in any part of the world. The exiſtence of theſe manuſcripts and verſions proves that the ſcriptures were not the production of any modern contrivance. It does away alſo the uncertainty which hangs over ſuch publications as the works, real or pretended, of Oſſian and Rowley, in which the editors are challenged to produce their manuſcripts, and to ſhow where they obtained their copies. The number of manuſcripts, far exceeding thoſe of any other book, and their wide diſperſion, affords an argument, in ſome meaſure, to the ſenſes, that the ſcriptures anciently, in like manner as at this day, were more read and ſought after than any other books, and that alſo in many different countries. The greateſt part of ſpurious Chriſtian writings are utterly loſt, the reſt preſerved by ſome ſingle manuſcript. There is weight alſo in Dr. Bentley's obſervation, that the New Teſtament has ſuffered leſs injury by the errors of tranſcribers than the works of any profane author of the ſame ſize and antiquity; that is, there never was any writing in the preſervation and purity of which the world was ſo intereſted or ſo careful.

II. An argument of great weight with thoſe who are judges of the proofs upon which it is founded, and capable, through their teſtimony, of being addreſſed to every underſtanding, is that which ariſes from the ſtyle and language of the New Teſtament. It is juſt ſuch language as might be expected from the apoſtles, from perſons of their age and in their ſituation, and from no other perſons. It is the ſtyle neither of claſſic authors, nor of the ancient Chriſtian fathers, but Greek coming from men of Hebrew origin; abounding, that is, with Hebraic and Syriac idioms,

[a] The Alexandrian manuſcript, now in the king's library, was written probably in the fourth or fifth century.

idioms, ſuch as would naturally be found in the writings of men who uſed a language ſpoken indeed where they lived, but not the common dialect of the country. This happy peculiarity is a ſtrong proof of the genuineneſs of theſe writings; for who ſhould forge them? The Chriſtian fathers were for the moſt part totally ignorant of Hebrew, and therefore were not likely to inſert Hebraiſms and Syriaſms into their writings. The few who had a knowledge of the Hebrew, as Juſtin Martyr, Origen, and Epiphanius, wrote in a language which bears no reſemblance to that of the New Teſtament. The Nazarenes, who underſtood Hebrew, uſed chiefly, perhaps almoſt entirely, the goſpel of St. Matthew, and therefore cannot be ſuſpected of forging the reſt of the ſacred writings. The argument, at any rate, proves the antiquity of theſe books; that they belonged to the age of the apoſtles; that they could be compoſed indeed in no other.[a]

III. Why ſhould we queſtion the genuineneſs of theſe books? Is it for that they contain accounts of ſupernatural events? I apprehend that this, at the bottom, is the real, though ſecret, cauſe of our heſitation about them; for had the writings inſcribed with the name of Matthew and John related nothing but ordinary hiſtory, there would have been no more doubt whether theſe writings were theirs, than there is concerning the acknowledged works of Joſephus or Philo, that is, there would have been no doubt at all. Now it ought to be conſidered that this reaſon, however it may apply to the credit which is given to a writer's judgment or veracity, affects the queſtion of genuineneſs very indirectly. The works of Bede exhibit many wonderful relations; but who for that reaſon doubts that they were written by Bede? The ſame of a multitude of other authors. To which may be added, that we aſk no more for our books than what we allow to other books in ſome ſort ſimilar to ours. We do not deny the genuineneſs

[a] See this argument ſtated more at large in Michaelis's introduction, (Marſh's tranſlation) vol. I. c. ii. ſec. x. from which theſe obſervations are taken.

genuineneſs of the Koran. We admit that the hiſtory of Appollonius Tyanæus, purporting to be written by Philoſtratus, was really written by Philoſtratus.

IV. If it had been an eaſy thing in the early times of the inſtitution to have forged Chriſtian writings, and to have obtained currency and reception to the forgeries, we ſhould have had many appearing in the name of Chriſt himſelf. No writings would have been received with ſo much avidity and reſpect as theſe; conſequently none afforded ſo great temptation to forgery. Yet have we heard but of one attempt of this ſort deſerving of the ſmalleſt notice, *that* in a piece of a very few lines, and ſo far from ſucceeding, I mean from obtaining acceptance and reputation, or an acceptance and reputation in any wiſe ſimilar to that which can be proved to have attended the books of the New Teſtament, that it is not ſo much as mentioned by any writer of the three firſt centuries. The learned reader need not be informed that I mean the epiſtle of Chriſt to Abgarus, king of Edeſſa, found at preſent in the work of Euſebius,[a] as a piece acknowledged by him, though not without conſiderable doubt whether the whole paſſage be not an interpolation, as it is moſt certain that, after the publication of Euſebius's work, this epiſtle was univerſally rejected.[b]

V. If the aſcription of the goſpels to their reſpective authors had been arbitrary or conjectural, they would have been aſcribed to more eminent men. This obſervation holds

[a] H. Eccl. l. i. c. 13.

[b] Auguſtin, A. D. 395, (de conſenſ. evang. c. 34) had *heard* that the Pagans pretended to be poſſeſſed of an epiſtle from Chriſt to Peter and Paul, but he had never ſeen it, and appears to doubt of the exiſtence of any ſuch piece, either genuine or ſpurious. No other ancient writer mentions it. He alſo, and he alone, notices, and that in order to condemn it, an epiſtle aſcribed to Chriſt by the Manichees, A. D. 270, and a ſhort hymn attributed to him by the Priſcillianiſts, A. D. 378, (cont. Fauſt. Man. lib. 28. c. 4.) The lateneſs of the writer who notices theſe things, the manner in which he notices them, and, above all, the ſilence of every preceding writer, render them unworthy of conſideration.

holds concerning the three firſt goſpels, the reputed authors of which were enabled, by their ſituation, to obtain true intelligence, and were likely to deliver an honeſt account of what they knew, but were perſons not diſtinguiſhed in the hiſtory by extraordinary marks of notice or commendation. Of the apoſtles, I hardly know any one of whom leſs is ſaid than of Matthew, or of whom the little that is ſaid, is leſs calculated to magnify his character. Of Mark nothing is ſaid in the goſpels; and what is ſaid of any perſon of that name in the acts, and in the epiſtles, in no part beſtows praiſe or eminence upon him. The name of Luke is mentioned only in St. Paul's epiſtles,[a] and that very tranſiently. The judgment, therefore, which aſſigned theſe writings to theſe authors proceeded, it may be preſumed, upon proper knowledge and evidence, and not upon a voluntary choice of names.

VI. Chriſtian writers and Chriſtian churches appear to have ſoon arrived at a very general agreement upon the ſubject, and that without the interpoſition of any public authority. When the diverſity of opinion which prevailed and prevails among Chriſtians in other points is conſidered, their concurrence in the canon of ſcripture is remarkable, and of great weight, eſpecially as it ſeems to have been the reſult of private and free inquiry. We have no knowledge of any interference of authority in the queſtion before the council of Laodicea in the year 363. Probably the decree of this council rather declared than regulated the public judgment, or, more properly ſpeaking, the judgment ſome neighbouring churches, the council itſelf conſiſting of no more than thirty or forty biſhops of Lydia and the adjoining countries.[b] Nor does its authority ſeem to have extended farther; for we find numerous Chriſtian writers, after this time, diſcuſſing the queſtion, "what books were entitled to be received as ſcripture," with great freedom, upon proper grounds of evidence, and without any reference to the deciſion at Laodicea.

Theſe

[a] Col. iv. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 11. Philem. 24.

[b] Lardner's Cred. vol. VIII. p. 291, et. ſeq.

Theſe conſiderations are not to be neglected; but of an argument concerning the genuineneſs of ancient writings, the ſubſtance undoubtedly and ſtrength is ancient teſtimony.

This teſtimony it is neceſſary to exhibit ſomewhat in detail; for when Chriſtian advocates merely tell us, that we have the ſame reaſon for believing the goſpels to be written by the evangeliſts, whoſe names they bear, as we have for believing the Commentaries to be Cæſar's, the Æneid Virgil's, or the Orations Cicero's, they content themſelves with an imperfect repreſentation. They ſtate nothing more than what is true, but they do not ſtate the truth correctly. In the number, variety, and early date of our teſtimonies, we far exceed all other ancient books. For one, which the moſt celebrated work of the moſt celebrated Greek or Roman writer can allege, we produce many. But then it is more requiſite in our books, than in theirs, to ſeparate and diſtinguiſh them from ſpurious competitors. The reſult, I am convinced, will be ſatisfactory to every fair inquirer; but this circumſtance renders an inquiry neceſſary.

In a work, however, like the preſent, there is a difficulty in finding a place for evidence of this kind. To purſue the detail of proofs throughout, would be to tranſcribe a great part of Dr. Lardner's eleven octavo volumes; to leave the argument without proofs, is to leave it without effect; for the perſuaſion produced by this ſpecies of evidence, depends upon a view and induction of the particulars which compoſe it.

The method which I propoſe to myſelf is, firſt, to place before the reader, in one view, the propoſitions which compriſe the ſeveral heads of our teſtimony, and afterwards, to repeat the ſame propoſitions in ſo many diſtinct ſections, with the neceſſary authorities ſubjoined to each.[a]



[a] The reader, when he has the propoſitions before him, will obſerve that the argument, if he ſhould omit the ſections, proceeds connectedly from this point.

The following, then, are the allegations upon the ſubject, which are capable of being eſtabliſhed by proof:

I. That the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, meaning thereby the four goſpels and the acts of the apoſtles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a ſeries of Chriſtian writers, beginning with thoſe who were contemporary with the apoſtles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in cloſe and regular ſucceſſion from their time to the preſent.

II. That when they are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted or alluded to with peculiar reſpect, as books *ſui generis*, as poſſeſſing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as concluſive in all queſtions and controverſies amongſt Chriſtians.

III. That they were, in very early times, collected into a diſtinct volume.

IV. That they were diſtinguiſhed by appropriate names and titles of reſpect.

V. That they were publickly read and expounded in the religious aſſemblies of the early Chriſtians.

VI. That commentaries were written upon them, harmonies formed out of them, different copies carefully collated, and verſions of them made into different languages.

VII. That they were received by Chriſtians of different ſects, by many heretics as well as catholics, and uſually appealed to by both ſides in the controverſies which aroſe in thoſe days.

VIII. That the four goſpels, the acts of the apoſtles, thirteen epiſtles of St. Paul, the firſt epiſtle of John, and the firſt of Peter, were received, without doubt, by thoſe who doubted concerning the other books which are included in our preſent canon.

IX. That the goſpels were attacked by the early adverſaries of Chriſtianity, as books containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.

X. That formal catalogues of authentic ſcriptures were publiſhed; in all which our preſent ſacred hiſtories were included.

XI. That

XI. That theſe propoſitions cannot be affirmed of any other books, claiming to be books of ſcripture ; by which I mean thoſe books, which are commonly called apochryphal books of the New Teſtament.

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## SECT. I.

*The hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, meaning thereby the four Goſpels and the Acts of the Apoſtles, are quoted, or alluded to, by a ſeries of Chriſtian writers, beginning with thoſe who were contemporary with the Apoſtles, or who immediately followed them, and proceeding in cloſe and regular ſucceſſion from their time to the preſent.*

THE medium of proof ſtated in this propoſition, is, of all others, the moſt unqueſtionable, the leaſt liable to any practices of fraud, and is not diminiſhed by the lapſe of ages. Biſhop Burnet, in the hiſtory of his own times, inſerts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's hiſtory. *One* ſuch inſertion is a proof, that Lord Clarendon's hiſtory was extant at the time when Biſhop Burnet wrote, that it had been read by Biſhop Burnet, that it was received by Biſhop Burnet as a work of Lord Clarendon's, and alſo regarded by him as an authentic account of the tranſactions which it relates : and it will be a proof of theſe points a thouſand years hence, or as long as the books exiſt. Juvenal having quoted, as Cicero's, that memorable line,

" O fortunatam natam me conſule Romam,"

the quotation would be ſtrong evidence, were there any doubt, that the oration, in which that line is found, actually came from Cicero's pen. Theſe inſtances, however ſimple, may ſerve to point out to a reader, who is little accuſtomed to ſuch reſearches, the nature and value of the argument.

The teſtimonies which we have to bring forward under this propoſition are the following.

I. There

I. There is extant an epiſtle aſcribed to Barnabas,[a] the companion of Paul. It is quoted as the epiſtle of Barnabas by Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194; by Origen, A. D. 230. It is mentioned by Euſebius, A. D. 315, and by Jerome, A. D. 392, as an ancient work in their time, bearing the name of Barnabas, and as well known and read amongſt Chriſtians, though not accounted a part of ſcripture. It purports to have been written ſoon after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, during the calamities which followed that diſaſter; and it bears the character of the age to which it profeſſes to belong.

In this epiſtle appears the following remarkable paſſage: "Let us therefore, beware leſt it come upon us, *as it is written*, there are many called, few choſen." From the expreſſion, "as it is written," we infer with certainty, that, at the time when the author of this epiſtle lived, there was a book extant, well known to Chriſtians, and of authority amongſt them, containing theſe words—"many are called, few choſen." Such a book is our preſent goſpel of St. Matthew, in which this text is twice found, and is found in no other book now known. There is a farther obſervation to be made upon the terms of the quotation. The writer of the epiſtle was a Jew. The phraſe "it is written," was the very form in which the Jews quoted their ſcriptures. It is not probable, therefore, that he would have uſed this phraſe, and without qualification, of any books but what had acquired a kind of ſcriptural authority. If the paſſage remarked in this ancient writing had been found in one of St. Paul's epiſtles, it would have been eſteemed by every one a high teſtimony to St. Matthew's goſpel. It ought, therefore, to be remembered, that the writing in which it *is* found was probably by very few years poſterior to thoſe of St. Paul.

Beſide

[a] Lardner's Cred. ed. 1755, vol. I. p. 23, et ſeq. The reader will obſerve from the references that the materials of theſe ſections are almoſt entirely extracted from Dr. Lardner's work—my office conſiſted in arrangement and ſelection.

Beſide this paſſage, there are alſo in the epiſtle before us ſeveral others, in which the ſentiment is the ſame with what we meet with in St. Matthew's goſpel, and two or three in which we recognize the ſame words. In particular, the author of the epiſtle repeats the precept, "give to every one that aſketh thee," and ſaith that Chriſt choſe as his apoſtles, who were to preach the goſpel, men who were great ſinners, that he might ſhow that he came, "not to call the righteous, but ſinners, to repentance."

II. We are in poſſeſſion of an epiſtle written by Clement, Biſhop of Rome,[a] whom ancient writers, without any doubt or ſcruple, aſſert to have been the Clement whom St. Paul mentions, Phil. iv. 3, "with *Clement* alſo, and other my fellow-labourers, whoſe names are in the book of life." This epiſtle is ſpoken of by the ancients as an epiſtle acknowledged by all; and, as Irenæus well repreſents its value, "written by Clement, who had ſeen the bleſſed apoſtles and converſed with them, who had the preaching of the apoſtles ſtill ſounding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes." It is addreſſed to the church of Corinth; and what alone may ſeem almoſt deciſive of its authenticity, Dyoniſius, Biſhop of Corinth, about the year 170, i. e. about eighty or ninety years after the epiſtle was written, bears witneſs, "that it had been wont to be read in that church from ancient times."

This epiſtle affords, amongſt others, the following valuable paſſages:—"Eſpecially remembering the words of the Lord Jeſus which he ſpake, teaching gentleneſs and long ſuffering; for thus he ſaid:[b] Be ye merciful that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven unto you; as you do, ſo ſhall it be done unto you; as you give, ſo ſhall it be given unto you; as ye judge, ſo ſhall ye be judged;

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 62, et ſeq.

[b] "Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy." Mat. v. 7.—"Forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven; give, and it ſhall be given unto you." Luke vi. 37, 38.—"Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged, and with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again." Mat. vii. 2.

judged ; as ye ſhow kindneſs, ſo ſhall kindneſs be ſhown unto you ; with what meaſure ye mete, with the ſame it ſhall be meaſured to you. By this command, and by theſe rules, let us eſtabliſh ourſelves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words."

Again, " Remember the words of the Lord Jeſus, for he ſaid, Woe to that man by whom offences come ; it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he ſhould offend one of my elect ; it were better for him that a mill-ſtone ſhould be tied about his neck, and that he ſhould be drowned in the ſea, than that he ſhould offend one of my little ones."[a]

In both theſe paſſages we perceive the high reſpect paid to the words of Chriſt as recorded by the evangeliſts : " *Remember* the words of the Lord Jeſus—by this command and by theſe rules let us eſtabliſh ourſelves, that we may always walk obediently to his holy words." We perceive alſo in Clement a total unconſciouſneſs of doubt, whether theſe were the real words of Chriſt, which are read as ſuch in the goſpels. This obſervation indeed belongs to the whole ſeries of teſtimony, and eſpecially to the moſt ancient part of it. Whenever any thing now read in the goſpels is met with in an early Chriſtian writing, it is always obſerved to ſtand there as acknowledged truth, i. e. to be introduced without heſitation, doubt, or apology. It is to be obſerved alſo, that as this epiſtle was written in the name of the church of Rome, and addreſſed to the church of Corinth, it ought to be taken as exhibiting the judgment not only of Clement, who drew up the letter, but of theſe churches themſelves, at leaſt as to the authority of the books referred to.

It

[a] Mat. xviii. 6. " But whoſo ſhall offend one of theſe little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were caſt into the ſea." The latter part of the paſſage in Clement agrees more exactly with Luke xvii. 2. " It were better for him that a mill-ſtone were hanged about his neck, and he caſt into the ſea, than that he ſhould offend one of theſe little ones."

It may be ſaid, that, as Clement hath not uſed words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever. The words of Chriſt, which he has put down, he might himſelf have heard from the apoſtles, or might have received through the ordinary medium of oral tradition. This hath been ſaid; but that no ſuch inference can be drawn from the abſence of words of quotation is proved by the three following conſiderations:—Firſt, that Clement, in the very ſame manner, namely, without any mark of reference, uſes a paſſage now found in the epiſtle to the Romans;[a] which paſſage, from the peculiarity of the words which compoſe it, and from their order, it is manifeſt that he muſt have taken from the book. The ſame remark may be repeated of ſome very ſingular ſentiments in the epiſtle to the Hebrews. Secondly, that there are many ſentences of St. Paul's firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, ſtanding in Clement's epiſtles without any ſign of quotation, which yet certainly are quotations; becauſe it appears that Clement had St. Paul's epiſtle before him, inaſmuch as in one place he mentions it in terms too expreſs to leave us in any doubt—"Take into your hands the epiſtle of the bleſſed apoſtle Paul." Thirdly, that this method of adopting words of ſcripture, without reference or acknowledgment, was, as will appear in the ſequel, a method in general uſe amongſt the moſt ancient Chriſtian writers. Theſe analogies not only repel the objection, but caſt the preſumption on the other ſide; and afford a conſiderable degree of poſitive proof, that the words in queſtion have been borrowed from the places of ſcripture in which we now find them.

But take it if you will the other way, that Clement had heard theſe words from the apoſtles or firſt teachers of Chriſtianity; with reſpect to the preciſe point of our argument, viz. that the ſcriptures contain what the apoſtles taught, this ſuppoſition may ſerve almoſt as well.

III. Near the concluſion of the epiſtle to the Romans, St. Paul, amongſt others, ſends the following ſalutation: "Salute

[a] Rom. i. 29.

"Salute Aſyncritus, Phlegon, *Hermas*, Patrobus, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them."

Of Hermas, who appears in this catalogue of Roman Chriſtians as contemporary with St. Paul, a book bearing the name, and (it is moſt probable) rightly, is ſtill remaining. It is called the Shepherd or Paſtor of Hermas.[a] Its antiquity is inconteſtible, from the quotations of it in Irenæus, A. D. 178, Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 194, Tertullian, A. D. 200, Origen, A. D. 230. The notes of time extant in the epiſtle itſelf agree with its title, and with the teſtimonies concerning it, for it purports to have been written during the life-time of Clement.

In this piece are tacit alluſions to St. Matthew's, St. Luke's and St. John's goſpels, that is to ſay, there are applications of thoughts and expreſſions found in theſe goſpels, without citing the place or writer from which they were taken. In this form appear in Hermas the confeſſing and denying of Chriſt; the parable of the ſeed ſown; the compariſon of Chriſt's diſciples to little children; the ſaying, "he that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery." The ſingular expreſſion, "having received all power from his father," in probable alluſion to Mat. xxviii. 18, and Chriſt being the "gate," or only way of coming, "to God," in plain alluſion to John xiv. 6—x. 7, 9. There is alſo a probable alluſion to Acts v. 32.

This piece is the repreſentation of a viſion, and has by many been accounted a weak and fanciful performance. I therefore obſerve, that the character of the writing has little to do with the purpoſe for which we adduce it. It is the age in which it was compoſed that gives the value to its teſtimony.

IV. Ignatius, as it is teſtified by ancient Chriſtian writers, became Biſhop of Antioch about thirty-ſeven years after Chriſt's aſcenſion; and therefore, from his time, and place, and ſtation, it is probable that he had known and converſed

[a] Lardner's Cred. vol. I. p. 111.

converſed with many of the apoſtles. Epiſtles of Ignatius are referred to by Polycarp his contemporary. Paſſages, found in the epiſtles now extant under his name, are quoted by Irenæus, A. D. 178; by Origen, A. D. 230; and the occaſion of writing the epiſtle is given at large by Euſebius and Jerome. What are called the ſmaller epiſtles of Ignatius are generally deemed to be thoſe which were read by Irenæus, Origen, and Euſebius.[a]

In theſe epiſtles are various undoubted alluſions to the goſpels of St. Matthew and St. John; yet ſo far of the ſame form with thoſe in the preceding articles, that, like them, they are not accompanied with marks of quotation.

Of theſe alluſions the following are clear ſpecimens:

*Matt.*[b]
- "Chriſt was baptized of John, that *all righteouſneſs might be fulfilled by him.*"
- "*Be ye wiſe as ſerpents* in all things, and *harmleſs as a dove.*"

*John.*[c]
- "Yet the Spirit is not deceived, being from God; for it knows *whence it comes, and whither it goes.*"
- "He (Chriſt) is the *door* of the Father, by which *enter in* Abraham and Iſaac and Jacob and the apoſtles and the church."

As to the manner of quotation, this is obſervable:—Ignatius, in one place, ſpeaks of St. Paul in terms of high reſpect, and quotes his epiſtle to the Epheſians by name; yet in ſeveral other places he borrows words and ſentiments from the ſame epiſtle without mentioning it: which

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 147.

[b] iii. 15. "For thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteouſneſs."
xi. 16. "Be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves."

[c] iii. 8. "The wind bloweth where it liſteth, and thou heareſt the ſound thereof, but canſt not tell *whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;* ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit."
x. 9. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he ſhall be ſaved."

which ſhews, that this was his general manner of uſing and applying writings then extant, and then of high authority.

V. Polycarp[a] had been taught by the apoſtles; had converſed with many who had ſeen Chriſt; was alſo by the apoſtles appointed Biſhop of Smyrna. This teſtimony concerning Polycarp is given by Irenæus, who in his youth had ſeen him. "I can tell the place," ſaith Irenæus, "in which the bleſſed Polycarp ſat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his perſon, and the diſcourſes he made to the people, and how he related his converſation with John and others who had ſeen the Lord, and how he related their ſayings, and what he had heard concerning the Lord, both concerning his miracles and his doctrine, as he had received them from the eye-witneſſes, of the word of life; all which Polycarp related agreeable to the ſcriptures."

Of Polycarp, whoſe proximity to the age and country, and perſons of the apoſtles, is thus atteſted, we have one undoubted epiſtle remaining. And this, though a ſhort letter, contains nearly forty clear alluſions to books of the New Teſtament; which is ſtrong evidence of the reſpect which Chriſtians of that age bore for theſe books.

Amongſt theſe, although the writings of St. Paul are more frequently uſed by Polycarp than other parts of ſcripture, there are copious alluſions to the goſpel of St. Matthew, ſome to paſſages found in the goſpels both of Matthew and Luke, and ſome which more nearly reſemble the words in Luke.

I ſelect the following, as fixing the authority of the Lord's prayer, and the uſe of it amongſt the primitive Chriſtians, "if therefore we *pray* the Lord that he *will forgive us, we ought alſo to forgive.*"

"With ſupplication *beſeeching* the all-ſeeing God *not to lead us into temptation.*"

And the following, for the ſake of repeating an obſervation already made, that words of our Lord, found in our goſpels,

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 192.

goſpels, were at this early day quoted as ſpoken by him; and not only ſo, but quoted with ſo little queſtion or conſciouſneſs of doubt, about their being really his words, as not even to mention, much leſs to canvaſs, the authority from which they were taken.

"But remembering what the Lord ſaid, teaching, judge not, that ye be not judged; forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven; be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; with what meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again."

Suppoſing Polycarp to have had theſe words from the books in which we now find them, it is manifeſt that theſe books were conſidered by him, and, as he thought, conſidered by his readers, as authentic accounts of Chriſt's diſcourſes; and that that point was inconteſtible.

The following is a deciſive, though what we call a tacit, reference to St. Peter's ſpeech in the acts of the apoſtles:—"whom God hath raiſed, having looſed the pains of death."

VI. Papias,[a] a hearer of John, and companion of Polycarp, as Irenæus atteſts, and of that age, as all agree, in a paſſage quoted by Euſebius, from a work now loſt, expreſsly aſcribes the reſpective goſpels to Matthew and Mark; and in a manner which proves, that theſe goſpels muſt have publickly borne the names of theſe authors at that time, and probably long before; for Papias does not ſay, that one goſpel was written by Matthew, and another by Mark, but, aſſuming this as perfectly well known, he tells us from what materials Mark collected his account, viz. from Peter's preaching, and in what language Matthew wrote, viz. in Hebrew. Whether Papias was well informed in this ſtatement or not, to the point for which I produce his teſtimony, namely, that theſe books bore theſe names at this time, his authority is complete.

VII. The writers hitherto alleged, had all lived and converſed with ſome of the apoſtles. The works of theirs which remain, are in general very ſhort pieces, yet rendered extremely valuable by their antiquity; and none, ſhort as

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 239.

as they are, but what contain ſome important teſtimony to our hiſtorical ſcriptures.[a]

Not long after theſe, that is, not much more than twenty years after the laſt, follows Juſtin Martyr.[b] His remaining works are much larger than any that have yet been noticed. Although the nature of his two principal writings, one of which was addreſſed to heathens, and the other was a conference with a Jew, did not lead him to ſuch frequent appeals to Chriſtian books, as would have appeared in a diſcourſe intended for Chriſtian readers; we nevertheleſs reckon up in them between twenty and thirty quotations of the goſpels and acts of the apoſtles, certain, diſtinct, and copious; if each verſe be counted ſeparately, a much greater number; if each expreſſion, a very great one.[c]

We meet with quotations of three of the goſpels within the compaſs of half a page: "and in other words he ſays, depart from me into outer darkneſs, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels," (which is from Matthew xxv. 41) "And again he ſaid in other words, I give unto you power to tread upon ſerpents and ſcorpions, and venomous beaſts, and upon all the power of the enemy." (This from Luke x. 19.) "And, before he was crucified,

[a] That the quotations are more thinly ſtrown in theſe, than in the writings of the next, and of ſucceeding ages, is, in a good meaſure, accounted for by the obſervation, that the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament had not *yet*, nor by their recency hardly could have, become a general part of Chriſtian education; read, as the Old Teſtament was, by Jews and Chriſtians from their childhood, and thereby intimately mixing, as that had long done, with all their religious ideas, and with their language upon religious ſubjects. In proceſs of time, and as ſoon perhaps as could be expected, this came to be the caſe. And when we perceive the effect, in a proportionably greater frequency, as well as copiouſneſs of alluſion. *

[b] Ib. vol. I. p. 258.

[c] "He cites our preſent canon, and particularly our four goſpels continually, I dare ſay, above two hundred times." Jones's new and full method. Appen. vol. I. p. 539, ed. 1726.

* *Mich. Intr. c. ii. ſect. vi.*

crucified, he ſaid, the Son of man muſt ſuffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Phariſees, and be crucified, and riſe again the third day. (This from Mark viii. 31.)

In another place Juſtin quotes a paſſage in the hiſtory of Chriſt's birth, as delivered by Matthew and John, and fortifies his quotation by this remarkable teſtimony; "as they have taught, who have writ the hiſtory of all things concerning our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; and we believe them."

Quotations alſo are found from the goſpel of St. John.

What, moreover, ſeems extremely material to be obſerved, is, that in all Juſtin's works from which might be extracted almoſt a complete life of Chriſt, there are but two inſtances, in which he refers to any thing as ſaid or done by Chriſt, which is not related concerning him in our preſent goſpels: which ſhews, that theſe goſpels, and theſe we may ſay, alone, were the authorities from which the Chriſtians of that day drew the information upon which they depended. One of theſe inſtances is of a ſaying of Chriſt not met with in any book now extant.[a] The other of a circumſtance in Chriſt's baptiſm, namely, a fiery or luminous appearance upon the water, which, according to Epiphanius, is noticed in the goſpel of the Hebrews; and which

[a] "Wherefore alſo our Lord Jeſus Chriſt has ſaid, in whatſoever I ſhall find you, in the ſame I will alſo judge you." Poſſibly Juſtin deſigned not to quote any text, but to repreſent the ſenſe of many of our Lord's ſayings. Fabricius has obſerved, that this ſaying has been quoted by many writers, and that Juſtin is the only one who aſcribes it to our Lord, and that perhaps by a ſlip of his memory.

Words reſembling theſe are read repeatedly in Ezekiel; "I will judge them according to their ways." (vii. 3. xxxiii. 20) It is remarkable that Juſtin had but juſt before expreſsly quoted Ezekiel. Mr. Jones upon this circumſtance founded a conjecture, that Juſtin writ only "the Lord hath ſaid," intending to quote the words of God, or rather the ſenſe of thoſe words, in Ezekiel, and that ſome tranſcriber, imagining theſe to be the words of Chriſt, inſerted in his copy the addition "Jeſus Chriſt." Vol. I. p. 539.

which might be true; but which, whether true or falſe, is mentioned by Juſtin, with a plain mark of diminution, when compared with what he quotes as reſting upon ſcripture authority. The reader will advert to this diſtinction; "and then, when Jeſus came to the river Jordan where John was baptizing, as Jeſus deſcended into the water, a fire alſo was kindled in Jordan; and when he came up out of the water, *the apoſtles of this our Chriſt have writ*, that the Holy Ghoſt lighted upon him as a dove."

All the references in Juſtin are made without mentioning the author; which proves that theſe books were perfectly notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Chriſt then extant, or, at leaſt, no others ſo received and credited, as to make it neceſſary to diſtinguiſh theſe from the reſt.

But although Juſtin mentions not the authors names, he calls the books, "Memoirs compoſed by the apoſtles," "Memoirs compoſed by the apoſtles and their companions;" which deſcriptions, the latter eſpecially, exactly ſuit with the titles which the goſpels and Acts of the apoſtles now bear.

VIII. Hegeſippus[a] came about thirty years after Juſtin. His teſtimony is remarkable only for this particular; that he relates of himſelf, that, travelling from Paleſtine to Rome, he viſited upon his journey many biſhops; and that "in every ſucceſſion, and in every city, the ſame doctrine is taught, which the law, and the prophets, and the *Lord* teacheth." This is an important atteſtation, from good authority, and of high antiquity. It is generally underſtood that by the word "Lord," Hegeſippus intended ſome writing or writings, containing the teaching of Chriſt, in which ſenſe alone, the term combines with the other terms "law and prophet," which denote writings; and together with them admits of the verb "preacheth," in the preſent tenſe. Then that theſe writings were ſome or all of the books of the New Teſtament, is rendered probable from hence, that, in the fragments

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 314.

ments of his works, which are preſerved in Euſebius, and in a writer of the ninth century, enough, though it be little, is left to ſhow, that Hegeſippus expreſſed divers things in the ſtyle of the goſpels, and of the Acts of the apoſtles; that he referred to the hiſtory in the ſecond chapter of Matthew, and recited a text of that goſpel as ſpoken by our Lord.

IX. At this time, viz. about the year 170, the churches of Lyons and Vienne in France ſent a relation of the ſufferings of their martyrs to the churches of Aſia and Phrygia.[a] The epiſtle is preſerved entire by Euſebius. And what carries in ſome meaſure the teſtimony of theſe churches to a higher age is, that they had now for their biſhop Pothinus, who was ninety years old, and whoſe early life conſequently muſt have immediately joined on with the times of the apoſtles. In this epiſtle are exact references to the goſpels of Luke and John, and to the Acts of the apoſtles. The form of reference the ſame as in all the preceding articles. That from St. John is in theſe words: "then was fulfilled that which was ſpoken by the Lord, that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God ſervice."[b]

X. The evidence now opens upon us full and clear. Irenæus[c] ſucceeded Pothinus as biſhop of Lyons. In his youth he had been a diſciple of Polycarp, who was a diſciple of John. In the time in which he lived, he was diſtant not much more than a century from the publication of the goſpels; in his inſtruction, only by one ſtep ſeparated from the perſons of the apoſtles. He aſſerts of himſelf and his contemporaries, that they were able to reckon up, in all the principal churches, the ſucceſſion of biſhops from the firſt.[d] I remark theſe particulars concerning Irenæus with more formality than uſual; becauſe the teſtimony which this writer affords to the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament, to their authority, and to the titles which they bear, is expreſs, poſitive, and excluſive. One principal

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 332. [b] John xvi. 2.
[c] Ib. vol. I. p. 344. [d] Adv. Hæreſ. l. 3. c. 3.

principal paſſage, in which this teſtimony is contained, opens with a preciſe aſſertion of the point which we have laid down as the foundation of our argument, viz. that the ſtory which the goſpels exhibit is the ſtory which the apoſtles told. "We have not received," ſaith Irenæus, "the knowledge of the way of our ſalvation by any others than thoſe by whom the goſpel has been brought to us. Which goſpel they firſt preached, and afterwards, by the will of God, committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith.—For after that our Lord roſe from the dead, and they (the apoſtles) were endowed from above with the power of the Holy Ghoſt coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things. They then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the bleſſing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the goſpel of God. Matthew then, among the Jews, writ a goſpel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the goſpel at Rome, and founding a church there. And after their exit, Mark alſo, the diſciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter. And Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the goſpel preached by him. (Paul) Afterwards John, the diſciple of the Lord, who alſo leaned upon his breaſt, he likewiſe publiſhed a goſpel while he dwelt at Epheſus in Aſia." If any modern divine ſhould write a book upon the genuineneſs of the goſpels, he could not aſſert it more expreſsly, or ſtate their original more diſtinctly, than Irenæus hath done within little more than a hundred years after they were publiſhed.

The correſpondency, in the days of Irenæus, of the oral and written tradition, and the deduction of the oral tradition through various channels from the age of the apoſtles, which was then lately paſſed, and, by conſequence, the probability that the books truly delivered what the apoſtles taught, is inferred alſo with ſtrict regularity from another paſſage of his works. "The tradition of the apoſtles (this father ſaith) hath ſpread itſelf over the whole univerſe; and all they

they who ſearch after the ſources of truth, will find this tradition to be held ſacred in every church. We might enumerate all thoſe who have been appointed biſhops to theſe churches by the apoſtles, and all their ſucceſſors, up to our days. It is by this uninterrupted ſucceſſion that we have received the tradition which actually exiſts in the church, as alſo the doctrines of truth, as it was preached by the apoſtles."[a] The reader will obſerve upon this, that the ſame Irenæus, who is now ſtating the ſtrength and uniformity of the tradition, we have before ſeen, recognizing, in the fulleſt manner, the authority of the written records; from which we are entitled to conclude, that they were then conformable to each other.

I have ſaid, that the teſtimony of Irenæus in favour of our goſpels is *excluſive* of all others. I allude to a remarkable paſſage in his works, in which, for ſome reaſons ſufficiently fanciful, he endeavours to ſhow, that there could be neither more nor fewer goſpels than *four*. With his argument we have no concern. The poſition itſelf proves that four and only four goſpels were at that time publickly read and acknowledged. That theſe were our goſpels, and in the ſtate in which we now have them, is ſhown from many other places of this writer beſide that which we have already alleged. He mentions how Matthew begins his goſpel, how Mark begins and ends his, and their ſuppoſed reaſons for ſo doing. He enumerates at length the ſeveral paſſages of Chriſt's hiſtory in Luke, which are not found in any of the other evangeliſts. He ſtates the particular deſign with which St. John compoſed his goſpel, and accounts for the doctrinal declarations which precede the narrative.

To the book of the Acts of the apoſtles, its author and credit, the teſtimony of Irenæus is no leſs explicit. Referring to the account of St. Paul's converſion and vocation, in the ninth chapter of that book, "Nor can they (ſays he, meaning the parties with whom he argues) ſhow that he is not to be credited, who has related to us the truth with



[a] Ir. in Hær. l. iii. c. 3.

the greateſt exactneſs." In another place, he has accurately collected the ſeveral texts, in which the writer of the hiſtory is repreſented as accompanying St. Paul, which leads him to deliver a ſummary of almoſt the whole of the laſt twelve chapters of the book.

In an author, thus abounding with references and alluſions to the ſcriptures, there is not one to any apocryphal Chriſtian writing whatever. This is a broad line of diſtinction between our ſacred books, and the pretenſions of all others.

The force of the teſtimony of the period which we have conſidered, is greatly ſtrengthened by the obſervation, that it is the teſtimony, and the concurring teſtimony, of writers who lived in countries remote from one another. Clement flouriſhed at Rome, Ignatius at Antioch, Polycarp at Smyrna, Juſtin Martyr in Syria, and Irenæus in France.

XI. Omitting Athenagoras and Theophilus, who lived about this time ;[a] in the remaining works of the former of whom are clear references to Mark and Luke ; and in the works of the latter who was biſhop of Antioch, the ſixth in ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, evident alluſions to Matthew and John, and probable alluſions to Luke, (which, conſidering the nature of the compoſitions, that they were addreſſed to heathen readers, is as much as could be expected ;) obſerving alſo, that the works of two learned Chriſtian writers of the ſame age, Miltiades and Pantænus,[b] are now loſt ; of which Miltiades Euſebius records, that his writings "were monuments of zeal for the divine oracles ;" and which Pantænus, as Jerome teſtifies, was a man of prudence and learning, both in the divine ſcriptures and ſecular literature, and had left many commentaries upon the holy ſcriptures then extant : paſſing by theſe without further remark, we come to one of the moſt voluminous of ancient Chriſtian writers, Clement of Alexandria.[c] Clement followed Irenæus at the diſtance of only ſixteen years, and

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 400.—Ib. 422. [b] Ib. vol. I. p. 418, 450.
[c] Ib. vol. II. p. 469.

and therefore may be ſaid to maintain the ſeries of teſtimony in an uninterrupted continuation.

In certain of Clement's works, now loſt, but of which various parts are recited by Euſebius, there is given a diſtinct account of the order in which the four goſpels were written. The goſpels, which contain the genealogies, were (he ſays) written firſt, Mark's next, at the inſtance of Peter's followers, and John's the laſt; and this account (he tells us) that he had received from Preſbyters of more ancient times. This teſtimony proves the following points; that theſe goſpels were the hiſtories of Chriſt then publickly received, and relied upon; that the dates, occaſions, and circumſtances of their publication, were at that time ſubjects of attention and inquiry amongſt Chriſtians. In the works of Clement which remain, the four goſpels are repeatedly quoted by the names of their authors, and the Acts of the apoſtles is expreſsly aſcribed to Luke. In one place, after mentioning a particular circumſtance, he adds theſe remarkable words: "We have not this paſſage *in the four goſpels delivered to us*, but in that according to the Egyptians;" which puts a marked diſtinction between the four goſpels and all other hiſtories, or pretended hiſtories, of Chriſt. In another part of his works, the perfect confidence with which he received the goſpels, is ſignified by him in theſe words: "That this is true appears from hence, that it is written in the goſpel according to St. Luke;" and again, I need not uſe many words, but only to allege the evangelic voice of the Lord." His quotations are numerous. The ſayings of Chriſt, of which he alleges many, are all taken from our goſpels, the ſingle exception to this obſervation appearing to be a looſe[a] quotation of a paſſage in St. Matthew's goſpel.

XII. In

[a] "Aſk great things, and the ſmall ſhall be added unto you." Clement rather choſe to expound the words of Matthew (vi. 33) than literally to cite them; and this is moſt undeniably proved by another place in the ſame Clement, where he both produces the text and theſe words as an expoſition:—"Seek ye firſt the kingdom of heaven and its righteouſneſs, for theſe are the great things; but

XII. In the age in which they lived,[a] Tertullian joins on with Clement. The number of the goſpels then received, the names of the evangeliſts, and their proper deſcriptions, are exhibited by this writer in one ſhort ſentence: "Among the *apoſtles*, John and Matthew teach us the faith; among *apoſtolical men*, Luke and Mark refreſh it." The next paſſage to be taken from Tertullian, affords as complete an atteſtation to the authenticity of our books, as can be well imagined. After enumerating the churches which had been founded by Paul, at Corinth, in Galatia, at Philippi, Theſſalonica, and Epheſus; the church of Rome eſtabliſhed by Peter and Paul; and other churches derived from John; he proceeds thus:—"I ſay then, that with them, but not with them only which are apoſtolical, but with all who have fellowſhip with them in the ſame faith, is that goſpel of Luke received from its firſt publication, which we ſo zealouſly maintain:" and preſently afterwards adds—"The ſame authority of the apoſtolical churches will ſupport the other goſpels, which we have from them, and according to them, I mean John's and Matthew's, although that likewiſe, which Mark publiſhed, may be ſaid to be Peter's, whoſe interpreter Mark was." In another place Tertullian affirms, that the three other goſpels were in the hands of the churches from the beginning, as well as Luke's. This noble teſtimony fixes the univerſality with which the goſpels were received, and their antiquity; that they were in the hands of all, and had been ſo from the firſt. And this evidence appears not more than one hundred and fifty years after the publication of the books. The reader muſt be given to underſtand that, when Tertullian ſpeaks of maintaining or defending (tuendi) the goſpel of St. Luke, he only means maintaining or defending the integrity of the copies of Luke received by Chriſtian churches, in oppoſition to certain

but the ſmall things, and things relating to this life, ſhall be added unto you." Jones's New and Full Method, vol. I. p. 553.

[a] Ib. vol. II. p. 561.

tain curtailed copies uſed by Marcion, againſt whom he writes.

This author frequently cites the Acts of the apoſtles under that title, once calls it Luke's commentary, and obſerves how St. Paul's epiſtles confirm it.

After this general evidence, it is unneceſſary to add particular quotations. Theſe, however, are ſo numerous and ample, as to have led Dr. Lardner to obſerve, "that there are more, and larger quotations of the ſmall volume of the New Teſtament in this one Chriſtian author, than there are of all the works of Cicero in writers of all characters for ſeveral ages."[a]

Tertullian quotes no Chriſtian writing as of equal authority with the ſcriptures, and no ſpurious book at all; a broad line of diſtinction, we may once more obſerve, between our ſacred books and all others.

We may again likewiſe remark the wide extent through which the reputation of the goſpels, and of the Acts of the apoſtles, had ſpread, and the perfect conſent in this point of diſtant and independent ſocieties. It is now only about one hundred and fifty years ſince Chriſt was crucified; and within this period, to ſay nothing of the apoſtolical fathers who have been noticed already, we have Juſtin Martyr at Neapolis, Theophilus at Antioch, Irenæus in France, Clement at Alexandria, Tertullian at Carthage, quoting the ſame books of hiſtorical ſcriptures, and, I may ſay, quoting theſe alone.

XIII. An interval of only thirty years, and that occupied by no ſmall number of Chriſtian writers,[b] whoſe works only remain in fragments and quotations, and in every one of which is ſome reference or other to the goſpels, (and in one of them (Hippolytus, as preſerved in Theodoret) is an abſtract of the whole goſpel hiſtory) brings us to a name of great celebrity in Chriſtian antiquity,

[a] Ib. p. 647.

[b] Minucius Felix, Apollonius, Caius, Aſterius, Urbanus, Alexander biſhop of Jeruſalem, Hippolitus, Ammonius, Julius Africanus.

tiquity, Origen[a] of Alexandria, who, in the quantity of his writings, exceeded the moſt laborious of the Greek and Latin authors. Nothing can be more peremptory upon the ſubject now under conſideration, and, from a writer of his learning and information, more ſatisfactory, than the declaration, of Origen, preſerved, in an extract from his works, by Euſebius: "That the four goſpels alone, are received without diſpute, by the whole church of God under heaven;" to which declaration is immediately ſubjoined a brief hiſtory of the reſpective authors, to whom they were then, as they are now, aſcribed. The language holden concerning the goſpels throughout the works of Origen which remain, entirely correſpond with the teſtimony here cited. His atteſtation to the Acts of the apoſtles is no leſs poſitive: "And Luke alſo once more ſounds the trumpet relating the Acts of the apoſtles." The univerſality with which the ſcriptures were then read, is well ſignified by this writer, in a paſſage in which he has occaſion to obſerve againſt Celſus, "that it is not in any private books, or ſuch as are read by a few only, and thoſe ſtudious perſons, but in books read by every body, that it is written, the inviſible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by things that are made." It is to no purpoſe to ſingle out quotations of ſcripture from ſuch a writer as this. We might as well make a ſelection of the quotations of ſcripture in Dr. Clark's ſermons. They are ſo thickly ſown in the works of Origen, that Dr. Mill ſays, "If we had all his works remaining, we ſhould have before us almoſt the whole text of the bible."[b]

Origen notices, in order to cenſure, certain apocryphal goſpels. He alſo uſes four writings of this ſort; that is, throughout his large works he once or twice, at the moſt, quotes each of the four; but always with ſome mark, either of direct reprobation, or of caution to his readers, manifeſtly eſteeming them of little or of no authority.

XIV. Gregory,

[a] Ib. vol. III. p. 234. [b] Mill. proleg. cap. vi. p. 66.

XIV. Gregory, biſhop of Neocæſarea, and Dionyſius of Alexandria, were ſcholars of Origen. Their teſtimony therefore, though full and particular, may be reckoned a repetition only of his. The ſeries, however, of evidence, is continued by Cyprian, Biſhop of Carthage, who flouriſhed within twenty years after Origen. "The church (ſays this father) is watered, like paradiſe, by four rivers, that is, by four goſpels." The Acts of the apoſtles is alſo frequently quoted by Cyprian under that name, and under the name of the "divine ſcriptures." In his various writings are ſuch conſtant and copious citations of ſcripture, as to place this part of the teſtimony beyond controverſy. Nor is there, in the works of this eminent African biſhop, one quotation of a ſpurious or apocryphal Chriſtian writing.

XV. Paſſing over a crowd[a] of writers following Cyprian, at different diſtances, but all within forty years of his time, and who all, in the imperfect remains of their works, either cite the hiſtorical ſcriptures of the New Teſtament, or ſpeak of them in terms of profound reſpect; I ſingle out Victorin, biſhop of Pettaw in Germany, merely on account of the remoteneſs of his ſituation from that of Origen and Cyprian, who were Africans; by which circumſtance, his teſtimony, taken in conjunction with theirs, proves that the ſcripture hiſtories, and the ſame hiſtories, were known and received from one ſide of the Chriſtian world to the other. This biſhop[b] lived about the year 290; and in a commentary upon this text of the Revelations, "The firſt was like a lion, the ſecond was like a calf, the third like a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle," he makes out that by the four creatures are intended the four goſpels, and, to ſhow the propriety of the ſymbols, he recites the ſubject with which each evangeliſt

[a] Novatus, Rome, A. D. 251. Dionyſius, Rome, A. D. 259. Commodian, A. D. 270. Anatolius, Laodicea, A. D. 270. Theognoſtus, A. D. 282. Methodius, Lycia, A. D. 290. Phileas, Egypt, 296.

[b] Ib. vol. V. p. 214.

geliſt opens his hiſtory. The explication is fanciful, but the teſtimony poſitive. He alſo expreſsly cites the Acts of the apoſtles.

XVI. Arnobius and Lactantius,[a] about the year 300, compoſed formal arguments upon the credibility of the Chriſtian religion. As theſe arguments were addreſſed to Gentiles, the authors abſtain from quoting Chriſtian books *by name*, one of them giving this very reaſon for his reſerve: but when they come to ſtate, for the information of their readers, the outlines of Chriſt's hiſtory, it is apparent that they draw their accounts from our goſpels, and from no other ſources; for theſe ſtatements exhibit a ſummary of almoſt every thing which is related of Chriſt's actions and miracles by the four evangeliſts. Arnobius vindicates, without mentioning their names, the credit of theſe hiſtorians, obſerving that they were eye-witneſſes of the facts which they relate, and that their ignorance of the arts of compoſition was rather a confirmation of their teſtimony, than an objection to it. Lactantius alſo argues in defence of the religion, from the conſiſtency, ſimplicity, diſintereſtedneſs, and ſufferings of the Chriſtian hiſtorians, meaning by that term our evangeliſts.

XVII. We cloſe the ſeries of teſtimonies with that of Euſebius,[b] Biſhop of Cæſarea, who flouriſhed in the year 315, contemporary with, or poſterior only by fifteen years, to the two authors laſt cited. This voluminous writer, and moſt diligent collector of the writings of others, beſide a variety of large works, compoſed a hiſtory of the affairs of Chriſtianity from its origin to his own time. His teſtimony to the ſcriptures, is the teſtimony of a man much converſant in the works of Chriſtian authors, written during the three firſt centuries of its era; and who had read many which are now loſt. In a paſſage of his evangelical demonſtration, Euſebius remarks, with great nicety, the delicacy of two of the evangeliſts, in their manner of noticing any circumſtance which regarded themſelves, and of Mark, as writing under Peter's direction,

[a] Ib. vol. VII. p. 43, 201. [b] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 33.

direction, in the circumſtances which regarded him. The illuſtration of this remark leads him to bring together long quotations from each of the evangeliſts; and the whole paſſage is a proof, that Euſebius, and the Chriſtians of thoſe days, not only read the goſpels, but ſtudied them with attention and exactneſs. In a paſſage of his eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, he treats, in form, and at large, of the occaſions of writing the four goſpels, and of the order in which they were written. The title of the chapter is "Of the Order of the Goſpels;" and it begins thus; "Let us obſerve the writings of this apoſtle John, which are not contradicted by any; and, firſt of all, muſt be mentioned, as acknowledged by all, the goſpel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven; and that it has been juſtly placed by the ancients the fourth in order, and after the other three, may be made evident in this manner." Euſebius then proceeds to ſhow that John wrote the laſt of the four, and that his goſpel was intended to ſupply the omiſſions of the others, eſpecially in the part of our Lord's miniſtry, which took place before the impriſonment of John the Baptiſt. He obſerves, "that the apoſtles of Chriſt were not ſtudious of the ornaments of compoſition, nor indeed forward to write at all, being wholly occupied with their miniſtry."

This learned author makes no uſe at all of Chriſtian writings, forged with the names of Chriſt's apoſtles, or their companions.

We cloſe this branch of our evidence here; becauſe, after Euſebius, there is no room for any queſtion upon the ſubject, the works of Chriſtian writers being as full of texts of ſcripture, and of references to ſcripture, as the diſcourſes of modern divines. Future teſtimonies to the books of ſcripture could only prove that they never loſt their character or authority.

## SECT. II.

*When the ſcriptures are quoted, or alluded to, they are quoted with peculiar reſpect, as books ſui generis, as poſſeſſing an authority which belonged to no other books, and as concluſive in all queſtions and controverſies amongſt Chriſtians.*

BESIDES the general ſtrain of reference and quotation which uniformly and ſtrongly indicates this diſtinction, the following may be regarded as ſpecific teſtimonies.

I. Theophilus,[a] biſhop of Antioch, the ſixth in ſucceſſion from the apoſtles, and who flouriſhed little more than a century after the books of the New Teſtament were written, having occaſion to quote one of our goſpels, writes thus: "Theſe things the holy ſcriptures teach us, and all who were moved by the Holy Spirit, among whom John ſays, in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God." Again; "concerning the righteouſneſs which the law teaches, the like things are to be found in the prophets and the *goſpels*, becauſe that all being inſpired, ſpoke by one and the ſame Spirit of God."[b] No words can teſtify more ſtrongly than theſe do, the high and peculiar reſpect in which theſe books were holden.

II. A writer againſt Artemon,[c] who may be ſuppoſed to come about one hundred and fifty-eight years after the publication of the ſcriptures, in a paſſage quoted by Euſebius, uſes theſe expreſſions: "Poſſibly what they (our adverſaries) ſay, might have been credited, *if firſt of all* the divine ſcriptures did not contradict them; *and then* the writings of certain brethren, more ancient than the times of Victor." The brethren mentioned by name, are Juſtin Miltiades, Tatian, Clement, Irenæus, Melito, with a general appeal to many more not named. This paſſage proves, firſt, that there was at that time a collection called divine ſcriptures; ſecondly, that theſe ſcriptures were eſteemed of

[a] Lard. Cred. pr. ii. vol. I. p. 429. [b] Ib. p. 448.
[c] Ib. vol. III. p. 40.

of higher authority than the writings of the moſt early and celebrated Chriſtians.

III. In a piece aſcribed to Hippolitus,[a] who lived near the ſame time, the author profeſſes, in giving his correſpondent inſtruction in the things about which he inquires, "to draw out of the *ſacred fountain*, and to ſet before him from the ſacred ſcriptures, what may afford him ſatisfaction." He then quotes immediately Paul's epiſtles to Timothy, and afterwards many books of the New Teſtament. This preface to the quotations, carries in it a marked diſtinction between the ſcriptures and other books.

IV. "*Our* aſſertions and diſcourſes," ſaith Origen,[b] "are unworthy of credit; we muſt receive the *ſcriptures* as witneſſes." After treating of the duty of prayer, he proceeds with his argument thus: "what we have ſaid may be proved from the divine ſcriptures." In his books againſt Celſus, we find this paſſage: "That our religion teaches us to ſeek after wiſdom, ſhall be ſhewn, both out of the ancient Jewiſh ſcriptures which we alſo uſe, and out of thoſe written ſince Jeſus, which are believed in the churches to be divine." Theſe expreſſions afford abundant evidence of the peculiar and excluſive authority which the ſcriptures poſſeſſed.

V. Cyprian, biſhop of Carthage,[c] whoſe age lies cloſe to that of Origen, earneſtly exhorts Chriſtian teachers in all doubtful caſes, "to go back to the *fountain*; and if the truth has in any caſe been ſhaken, to recur to the goſpels and apoſtolic writings."—"The precepts of the goſpel," ſays he in another place, "are nothing leſs than authoritative divine leſſons, the foundations of our hope, the ſupports of our faith, the guides of our way, the ſafeguards of our courſe to heaven."

VI. Novatus,[d] a Roman, contemporary with Cyprian, appeals to the ſcriptures, as the authority by which all errors were to be repelled, and diſputes decided. "That Chriſt is not only man but God alſo, is proved by the ſacred

[a] Ib. vol. III. p. 112. [b] Ib. p. 287, 288, 289.
[c] Ib. vol. IV. p. 840. [d] Ib. vol. V. p. 102.

cred authority of the divine writings."—"The divine ſcripture eaſily detects and confutes the frauds of heretics." "It is not by the fault of the heavenly ſcriptures, which never deceive." Stronger aſſertions than theſe could not be uſed.

VII. At the diſtance of twenty years from the writer laſt cited, Anatolius,[a] a learned Alexandrian, and biſhop of Laodicea, ſpeaking of the rule for keeping Eaſter, a queſtion at that day agitated with much earneſtneſs, ſays of thoſe whom he oppoſed, "they can by no means prove their point by the authority of the divine ſcripture."

VIII. The Arians, who ſprung up about fifty years after this, argued ſtrenuouſly againſt the uſe of the words conſubſtantial and eſſence, and like phraſes; "*becauſe they were not in ſcripture.*[b] And in the ſame ſtrain, one of their advocates opens a conference with Auguſtine, after the following manner: "If you ſay what is reaſonable, I muſt ſubmit. If you allege any thing from the divine ſcriptures, which are common to both, I muſt hear. But unſcriptural expreſſions (quæ extra ſcripturam ſunt) deſerve no regard."

Athanaſius, the great antagoniſt of Arianiſm, after having enumerated the books of the Old and New Teſtament, adds; "Theſe are the fountains of ſalvation, that he who thirſts may be ſatisfied with the oracles contained in them. In theſe alone the doctrine of ſalvation is proclaimed. Let no man add to them, or take any thing from them."[c]

IX. Cyril, biſhop of Jeruſalem,[d] who wrote about twenty years after the appearance of Arianiſm, uſes theſe remarkable words: "concerning the divine and holy myſteries of faith, not the leaſt article ought to be delivered without the divine ſcriptures." We are aſſured, that Cyril's ſcriptures were the ſame as ours, for he has left us a catalogue of the books included under that name.

X. Epiphanius,[e] twenty years after Cyril, challenges the Arians, and the followers of Origen, "to produce any

[a] Ib, vol. V. p. 146. [b] Ib. vol. VII. p. 283, 284.
[c] Ib. vol. XII. p. 182. [d] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 276. [e] Ib. p. 314.

any paſſage of the Old or New Teſtament, favouring their ſentiments."

XI. Phæbadius, a Gallic biſhop, who lived about thirty years after the council of Nice, teſtifies, that "the biſhops of that council firſt conſulted the ſacred volumes, and then declared their faith."[a]

XII. Baſil, biſhop of Cæſarea, in Capadocia, contemporary with Epiphanius, ſays, "that hearers inſtructed in the ſcriptures, ought to examine what is ſaid by their teachers, and to embrace what is agreeable to the ſcriptures, and to reject what is otherwiſe."[b]

XIII. Ephraim, the Syrian, a celebrated writer of the ſame times, bears this concluſive teſtimony to the propoſition which forms the ſubject of our preſent chapter: "The truth written in the ſacred volume of the goſpel, is a perfect rule. Nothing can be taken from it, nor added to it, without great guilt."[c]

XIV. If we add Jerome to theſe, it is only for the evidence which he affords of the judgment of preceding ages. Jerome obſerves, concerning the quotations of *ancient* Chriſtian writers, that is, of writers who were *ancient* in the year 400, that they made a diſtinction between books, ſome they quoted as of authority, and others not: which obſervation relates to the books of ſcripture, compared with other writings, apocryphal or heathen.[d]

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## SECT. III.

*The ſcriptures were in very early times collected into a diſtinct volume.*

IGNATIUS, who was biſhop of Antioch within forty years after the aſcenſion, and who had lived and converſed with the apoſtles, ſpeaks of the goſpel and of the apoſ-



[a] Ib. vol. IX. p. 52. [b] Ib. vol. IX. p. 124.
[c] Ib. p. 202. [d] Vol. X. p. 123, 124.

tles in terms which render it very probable, that he meant by the goſpel, the book or volume of the goſpels, and by the apoſtles, the book or volume of their epiſtles. His words in one place are,[a] "fleeing to the goſpel as the fleſh of Jeſus, and to the apoſtles as the preſbytery of the church;" that is, as Le Clerc interprets them, "in order to underſtand the will of God, he fled to the goſpels, which he believed no leſs than if Chriſt in the fleſh had been ſpeaking to him; and to the writings of the apoſtles, whom he eſteemed as the preſbytery of the whole Chriſtian church." It muſt be obſerved, that about eighty years after this we have direct proof, in the writings of Clement of Alexandria,[b] that theſe two names, "goſpel" and "apoſtles," were the names by which the writings of the New Teſtament, and the diviſion of theſe writings, were uſually expreſſed.

Another paſſage from Ignatius is the following:—"But the goſpel has ſomewhat in it more excellent, the appearance of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, his paſſion, and reſurrection."[c]

And a third, "Ye ought to hearken to the prophets, but eſpecially to the goſpel, in which the paſſion has been manifeſted to us, and the reſurrection perfected." In this laſt paſſage the prophets and the goſpel are put in conjunction; and as Ignatius undoubtedly meant by the prophets a collection of writings, it is probable that he meant the ſame by the goſpel, the two terms ſtanding in evident paralleliſm with each other.

This interpretation of the word "goſpel" in the paſſages above quoted from Ignatius, is confirmed by a piece of nearly equal antiquity, the relation of the martyrdom of Polycarp by the church of Smyrna. "All things," ſay they, "that went before were done, that the Lord might ſhow us a martyrdom according to the goſpel, for he expected to be delivered up as the Lord alſo did."[d] And in another place, "we do not commend thoſe who offer

[a] Lard. Cred. pr. ii. vol. I. p. 180.
[b] Ib. vol. II. p. 516. [c] Ib. p. 182. [d] Ig. Ep. c. i.

offer themſelves, foraſmuch as the goſpel teaches us no ſuch thing."[a] In both theſe places, what is called *the goſpel* ſeems to be the hiſtory of Jeſus Chriſt, and of his doctrine.

If this be the true ſenſe of the paſſages, they are not only evidences of our propoſition, but ſtrong, and very ancient, proofs of the high eſteem in which the books of the New Teſtament were holden.

II. Euſebius relates, that Quadratus and ſome others, who were the immediate ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, travelling abroad to preach Chriſt, carried the goſpels with them, and delivered them to their converts. The words of Euſebius are, "then travelling abroad, they performed the work of evangeliſts, being ambitious to preach Chriſt, and *deliver the ſcripture of the divine goſpels.*"[b] Euſebius had before him the writings both of Quadratus himſelf, and of many others of that age, which are now loſt. It is reaſonable, therefore, to believe, that he had good grounds for his aſſertion. What is thus recorded of the goſpels took place within ſixty, or at the moſt ſeventy, years after they were publiſhed; and it is evident, that they muſt, before this time, and, it is probable, long before this time, have been in general uſe, and in high eſteem in the churches planted by the apoſtles; inaſmuch as they were now, we find, collected into a volume, and the immediate ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, they who preached the religion of Chriſt to thoſe who had not already heard it, carried the volume with them, and delivered it to their converts.

III. Irenæus, in the year 178,[c] puts the evangelic and apoſtolic writings in connexion with the law and the prophets, manifeſtly intending by the one a code or collection of Chriſtian ſacred writing, as the other expreſſed the code or collection of Jewiſh ſacred writings. And

IV. Melito, at this time biſhop of Sardis, writing to one Oneſimus, tells his correſpondent,[d] that he had procured an accurate account of the books of the OLD Teſtament.

[a] Ib. c. iv. [b] Lard. Cred. p. ii. vol. I. p. 236.
[c] Ib. vol. I. p. 383. [d] Ib. p. 331.

ment. The occurrence, in this paſſage, of the term *Old* Teſtament, has been brought to prove, and it certainly does prove, that there was then a volume or collection of writings called the New Teſtament.

V. In the time of Clement of Alexandria, about fifteen years after the laſt quoted teſtimony, it is apparent that the Chriſtian ſcriptures were divided into two parts, under the general titles of the goſpels and apoſtles; and that both theſe were regarded as of the higheſt authority. One, out of many expreſſions of Clement alluding to this diſtribution, is the following:—"There is a conſent and harmony between the law and the prophets, the apoſtles and the goſpel."[a]

VI. The ſame diviſion, "prophets, goſpels, and apoſtles," appears in Tertullian,[b] the contemporary of Clement. The collection of the goſpels is likewiſe called by this writer the "Evangelic Inſtrument;"[c] the whole volume, the "New Teſtament;" and the two parts, the "Goſpels and Apoſtles."[d]

VII. From many writers alſo of the third century, and eſpecially from Cyprian, who lived in the middle of it, it is collected, that the Chriſtian ſcriptures were divided into two codes or volumes, one called the "goſpels or ſcriptures of the Lord," the other, the "Apoſtles or epiſtles of the Apoſtles."[e]

VIII. Euſebius, as we have already ſeen, takes ſome pains to ſhow, that the goſpel of St. John had been juſtly placed by the ancients "the fourth in order, and after the other three."[f] Theſe are the terms of his propoſition; and the very introduction of ſuch an argument proves inconteſtibly, that the four goſpels had been collected into a volume to the excluſion of every other; that their order in the volume had been adjuſted with much conſideration; and that this had been done by thoſe who were called ancients in the time of Euſebius.

In

[a] Ib. vol. II. p. 516. [b] Ib. p. 631.
[c] Ib. vol. II. p. 574. [d] Ib. p. 632.
[e] Ib. vol. IV. p. 846. [f] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 90.

In the Diocletian perſecution in the year 303, the ſcriptures were ſought out and burnt ;[a] many ſuffered death rather than deliver them up ; and thoſe who betrayed them to the perſecutors were accounted as lapſed and apoſtate. On the other hand, Conſtantine, after his converſion, gave directions for multiplying copies of the divine oracles, and for magnificently adorning them at the expenſe of the imperial treaſury,[b] what the Chriſtians of that age ſo richly embelliſhed in their proſperity, and, which is more, ſo tenaciouſly preſerved under perſecution, was the very volume of the New Teſtament which we now read.

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## SECT. IV.

*Our preſent ſacred writings were ſoon diſtinguiſhed by appropriate names and titles of reſpect.*

I. POLYCARP: "I truſt that ye are well exerciſed in the holy ſcriptures—as in theſe ſcriptures it is ſaid, be ye angry and ſin not, and let not the ſun go down upon your wrath."[c] This paſſage is extremely important ; becauſe it proves that, in the time of Polycarp, who had lived with the apoſtles, there were Chriſtian writings diſtinguiſhed by the name of "holy ſcriptures," or ſacred writings. Moreover the text quoted by Polycarp is a text found in the collection at this day. What alſo the ſame Polycarp hath elſewhere quoted in the ſame manner, may be conſidered as proved to belong to the collection ; and this comprehends St. Matthew's, and, probably, St. Luke's goſpel, the Acts of the Apoſtles, ten epiſtles of Paul, the firſt epiſtle of Peter, and the firſt of John.[d] In another place Polycarp has theſe words : "Whoever perverts the oracles of the Lord to his own luſts, and ſays there is neither reſurrection nor judgment,

[a] Ib. vol. VII. p. 214. et ſeq. [b] Ib. p. 432.
[c] Ib. vol. I. p. 203. [d] Ib. p. 223.

judgment, he is the firſt-born of Satan."[a] It does not appear what elſe Polycarp could mean by the "oracles of the Lord," but thoſe ſame "holy ſcriptures," or ſacred writings, of which he had ſpoken before.

II. Juſtin Martyr, whoſe apology was written about thirty years after Polycarp's epiſtle, expreſsly cites ſome of our preſent hiſtories under the title of GOSPEL, and that, not as a name by him firſt aſcribed to them, but as the name by which they were generally known in his time. His words are theſe:—"For the apoſtles in the memoirs compoſed by them, *which are called goſpels*, have thus delivered it, that Jeſus commanded them to take bread, and give thanks."[b] There exiſts no doubt, but that, by the memoirs above-mentioned, Juſtin meant our preſent hiſtorical ſcriptures, for, throughout his works, he quotes theſe, and no others.

III. Dionyſius, biſhop of Corinth, who came thirty years after Juſtin, in a paſſage preſerved in Euſebius, (for his works are loſt) ſpeaks of "the ſcriptures of the Lord."[c]

IV. And at the ſame time, or very nearly ſo, by Irenæus, biſhop of Lyons in France,[d] they are called "divine ſcriptures,"—"divine oracles,"—"ſcriptures of the Lord,"—"evangelic and apoſtolic writings."[e] The quotations of Irenæus prove decidedly, that our preſent goſpels, and theſe alone, together with the Acts of the apoſtles, were the hiſtorical books comprehended by him under theſe appellations.

V. St. Matthew's goſpel is quoted by Theophilus, biſhop of Antioch, contemporary with Irenæus, under the title of the "evangelic voice;"[f] and the copious works of Clement of Alexandria, publiſhed within fifteen years of the ſame time, aſcribe to the books of the New Teſtament the various titles of "ſacred books,"—"divine ſcriptures,"

[a] Ib. p. 222. [b] Ib. p. 271. [c] Ib. p. 298.

[d] The reader will obſerve the remoteneſs of theſe two writers in country and ſituation.

[e] Ib. p. 343, et ſeq. [f] Ib. p. 427.

ſcriptures,"—"divinely inſpired ſcriptures,"—"ſcriptures of the Lord,"—"the true evangelical canon."[a]

VI. Tertullian, who joins on with Clement, beſide adopting moſt of the names and epithets above noticed, calls the goſpels "our digeſta," in alluſion, as it ſhould ſeem, to ſome collection of Roman laws [b] then extant.

VII. By Origen, who came thirty years after Tertullian, the ſame, and others no leſs ſtrong titles, are applied to the Chriſtian ſcriptures; and, in addition thereunto, this writer frequently ſpeaks of the "Old and New Teſtament,"—"the ancient and new ſcriptures,"—"the ancient and new oracles."[c]

VIII. In Cyprian, who was not twenty years later, they are "books of the ſpirit,"—"divine fountains,"—"fountains of the divine fulneſs."[d]

The expreſſions we have thus quoted are evidences of high and peculiar reſpect. They all occur within two centuries from the publication of the books. Some of them commence with the companions of the apoſtles; and they increaſe in number and variety, through a ſeries of writers, touching upon one another, and deduced from the firſt age of the religion.

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## SECT. V.

*Our ſcriptures were publickly read and expounded in the religious aſſemblies of the early Chriſtians.*

JUSTIN MARTYR, who wrote in the year 140, which was ſeventy or eighty years after ſome, and leſs, probably, after others of the goſpels were publiſhed, giving in his firſt apology, an account to the emperor of the Chriſtian worſhip, has this remarkable paſſage:

"The

[a] Ib. vol. II. p. 515. [b] Ib. p. 630.
[c] Ib. vol. III. p. 280. [d] Ib. vol. IV. p. 844.

"The memoirs of the apoſtles, or the writings of the prophets, are read according as the time allows, and when the reader has ended, the preſident makes a diſcourſe, exhorting to the imitation of ſo excellent things."[a]

A few ſhort obſervations will ſhow the value of this teſtimony.

1. The "memoirs of the apoſtles," Juſtin in another place expreſsly tells us are what are called "goſpels;" and that they were the goſpels, which we now uſe, is made certain by Juſtin's numerous quotations of *them*, and his ſilence about any others.

2. Juſtin deſcribes the general uſage of the Chriſtian church.

3. Juſtin does not ſpeak of it as recent or newly inſtituted, but in the terms in which men ſpeak of eſtabliſhed cuſtoms.

II. Tertullian, who followed Juſtin at the diſtance of about fifty years, in his account of the religious aſſemblies of Chriſtians as they were conducted in his time, ſays, "We come together to recollect the divine ſcriptures; we nouriſh our faith, raiſe our hope, confirm our truſt, by the ſacred word."[b]

III. Euſebius records of Origen, and cites for his authority the letters of biſhops contemporary with Origen, that, when he went into Paleſtine about the year 216, which was only 16 years after the date of Tertullian's teſtimony, he was deſired by the biſhops of that country to diſcourſe and expound the ſcriptures publickly in the church, though he was not yet ordained a preſbyter.[c] This anecdote recognizes the uſage, not only of reading, but of expounding, the ſcriptures; and both as ſubſiſting in full force. Origen alſo himſelf bears witneſs to the ſame practice: "This (ſays he) we do, when the ſcriptures are read in the church, and when the diſcourſe for explication is delivered to the people."[d] And, what is a ſtill more ample teſtimony, many homilies of his upon

[a] Ib. vol I. p. 273. [b] Ib. vol. II. p. 628.
[c] Ib. vol. III. p. 68. [d] Ib. p. 302.

on the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament, delivered by him in the aſſemblies of the church, are ſtill extant.

IV. Cyprian, whoſe age was not twenty years lower than that of Origen, gives his people an account of having ordained two perſons, who were before confeſſors, to be readers, and what they were to read, appears by the reaſon which he gives for his choice :—" Nothing (ſays Cyprian) can be more fit, than that he, who has made a glorious confeſſion of the Lord, ſhould read publickly in the church ; that he who has ſhown himſelf willing to die a martyr, ſhould read the goſpel of Chriſt, by which martyrs are made."[a]

V. Intimations of the ſame cuſtom may be traced in a great number of writers in the beginning and throughout the whole of the fourth century. Of theſe teſtimonies I will only uſe one as being, of itſelf, expreſs and full. Auguſtine, who appeared near the concluſion of the century, diſplays the benefit of the Chriſtian religion on this very account, the public reading of the ſcriptures in the churches, " where (ſays he) is a confluence of all ſorts of people of both ſexes, and where they hear how they ought to live well in this world, that they may deſerve to live happily and eternally in another." And this cuſtom he declares to be univerſal : " The canonical books of ſcripture being read every where, the miracles therein recorded are well known to all people." [b]

It does not appear that any books, other than our preſent ſcriptures, were thus publickly read, except that the epiſtle of Clement was read in the church of Corinth, to which it was addreſſed, and in ſome others ; and that the Shepherd of Hermas was read in many churches.

Nor does it ſubtract much from the value of the argument, that theſe two writings partly come within it, becauſe we allow them to be the genuine writings of apoſtolical men. There is not the leaſt evidence, that any other goſpel, than the four which we receive, was ever admitted to this diſtinction.



[a] Ib. vol. IV. p. 842. [b] Ib. vol. X. p. 276, et. ſeq.

## SECT. VI.

*Commentaries were anciently written upon the ſcriptures; harmonies formed out of them; different copies carefully collated; and verſions made of them into different languages.*

NO greater proof can be given of the eſteem in which theſe books were holden by the ancient Chriſtians, or of the ſenſe then entertained of their value and importance, than the induſtry beſtowed upon them. And it ought to be obſerved, that the value and importance of theſe books conſiſted entirely in their genuineneſs and truth. There was nothing in them as works of taſte, or as compoſitions, which could have induced any one to have written a note upon them. Moreover it ſhows that they were even *then* conſidered as ancient books. Men do not write comments upon publications of their own times: therefore the teſtimonies cited under this head, afford an evidence which carries up the evangelic writings much beyond the age of the teſtimonies themſelves, and to that of their reputed authors.

I. Tatian, a follower of Juſtin Martyr, and who flouriſhed about the year 170, compoſed a harmony, or collation of the goſpels, which he called *Diateſſaron* of the four.[a] The title, as well as the work, is remarkable; becauſe it ſhows that then, as now, there were four, and only four goſpels, in general uſe with Chriſtians. And this was little more than a hundred years after the publication of ſome of them.

II. Pantænus, of the Alexandrian ſchool, a man of great reputation and learning, who came twenty years after Tatian, wrote many commentaries upon the holy ſcriptures, which, as Jerome teſtifies, were extant in his time.[b]

III. Clement of Alexandria wrote ſhort explications of many books of the Old and New Teſtament.[c]

IV. Tertullian

[a] Ib. vol. I. p. 307. [b] Ib. vol. I. p. 455.
[c] Ib. vol. II. p. 462.

IV. Tertullian appeals from the authority of a later verſion then in uſe to the "authentic Greek."[a]

V. An anonymous author, quoted by Euſebius, and who appears to have written about the year 212, appeals to the *ancient copies* of the ſcriptures, in refutation of ſome corrupt readings alleged by the followers of Artemon.[b]

VI. The ſame Euſebius, mentioning by name ſeveral writers of the church who lived at this time, and concerning whom he ſays, "there ſtill remain divers monuments of the laudable induſtry of thoſe ancient and eccleſiaſtical men," (i. e. of Chriſtian writers, who were conſidered as ancient in the year 300) adds, "there are beſides treatiſes of many others, whoſe names we have not been able to learn, orthodox and eccleſiaſtical men, as the interpretations of the divine ſcriptures, given by each of them, ſhow."[c]

VII. The five laſt teſtimonies may be referred to the year 200, immediately after which, a period of thirty years gives us,

Julius Africanus, who wrote an epiſtle upon the apparent difference in the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, which he endeavours to reconcile by the diſtinction of natural and legal deſcent, and conducts his hypotheſis with great induſtry through the whole ſeries of generations;[d]

Ammonius, a learned Alexandrian, who compoſed, as Tatian had done, a harmony of *the four goſpels;* which proves, as Tatian's work did, that there were four goſpels, and no more, at this time in uſe in the church. It affords alſo an inſtance of the zeal of Chriſtians for thoſe writings, and of their ſolicitude about them;[e]

And, above both theſe, Origen, who wrote commentaries, or homilies, upon moſt of the books included in the New Teſtament, and upon no other books but theſe. In particular, he wrote upon St. John's goſpel, very largely upon

[a] Ib. p. 638. [b] Ib. vol. III. p. 46.
[c] Ib. vol. II. p. 551. [d] Ib. vol. III. p. 170.
[e] Ib. p. 122.

upon St. Matthew's, and commentaries, or homilies, upon the Acts of the apoſtles.[a]

VIII. In addition to theſe, the third century likewiſe contains,

Dionyſius of Alexandria, a very learned man, who compared, with great accuracy, the accounts in the four goſpels of the time of Chriſt's reſurrection, adding a reflection which ſhowed his opinion of their authority:—"Let us not think that the evangeliſts diſagree, or contradict each other, although there be ſome ſmall difference; but let us honeſtly and faithfully endeavour to reconcile what we read."[b]

Victorin, biſhop of Pettaw in Germany, who wrote comments upon St. Matthew's goſpel;[c]

Lucian, a preſbyter of Antioch, and Heſychius, an Egyptian biſhop, who put forth editions of the New Teſtament.

IX. The fourth century ſupplies a catalogue[d] of fourteen writers, who expended their labours upon the books of the New Teſtament, and whoſe works or names are come down to our times; amongſt which number, it may be ſufficient, for the purpoſe of ſhowing the ſentiments and the ſtudies of learned Chriſtians of that age, to notice the following:

Euſebius, in the very beginning of the century, wrote expreſsly upon the diſcrepancies obſervable in the goſpels, and likewiſe a treatiſe, in which he pointed out what things are related by four, what by three, what by two, and

[a] Ib. p. 352, 192, 202, 245. [b] Ib. vol. IV. p. 661.

[c] Ib. p. 195.

[d]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Euſebius, A. D. | 315 | Gregory, Nyſſen, | 371 |
| Juvencus, Spain, | 330 | Didymus of Alex. | 370 |
| Theodore, Thrace, | 334 | Ambroſe of Milan, | 374 |
| Hilary, Poictiers, | 354 | Diodore of Tarſus, | 378 |
| Fortunatus, | 340 | Gaudentius of Breſcia, | 387 |
| Apollinarius of Laodicea, | 362 | Theodore of Cilicia, | 394 |
| Damaſus, Rome, | 366 | Jerome, | 392 |
| | | Chryſoſtom, | 398 |

and what by one evangeliſt.[a] This author alſo teſtifies, what is certainly a material piece of evidence, "that the writings of the apoſtles had obtained ſuch an eſteem, as to be tranſlated into every language both of Greeks and Barbarians, and to be diligently ſtudied by all nations."[b] This teſtimony was given about the year 300; how long *before* that date theſe tranſlations were made, does not appear.

Damaſus, biſhop of Rome, correſponded with St. Jerome upon the expoſition of difficult texts of ſcripture; and, in a letter ſtill remaining, deſires Jerome to give him a clear explanation of the word Hoſanna, found in the New Teſtament; "he (Damaſus) having met with very different interpretations of it in the Greek and Latin commentaries of Catholic writers which he had read."[c] This laſt clauſe ſhows the number and variety of commentaries then extant.

Gregory of Nyſſen, at one time, appeals to the moſt exact copies of St. Mark's goſpel; at another time, compares together, and propoſes to reconcile, the ſeveral accounts of the reſurrection *given by the four evangeliſts*; which limitation proves, that there were no other hiſtories of Chriſt deemed authentic beſide theſe, or included in the ſame character with theſe. This writer obſerves, acutely enough, that the diſpoſition of the clothes in the ſepulchre, the napkin that was about our Saviour's head not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itſelf, did not beſpeak the terror and hurry of thieves, and therefore refutes the ſtory of the body being ſtolen.[d]

Ambroſe, biſhop of Milan, remarked various readings in the Latin copies of the New Teſtament, and appeals to the original Greek;

And Jerome, towards the concluſion of this century, put forth an edition of the New Teſtament in Latin, corrected, at leaſt as to the goſpels, by Greek copies, "and thoſe (he ſays) ancient."



[a] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 46. [b] Ib. p. 201.
[c] Ib. vol. IX. p. 108. [d] Ib. p. 163.

Laſtly, Chryſoſtom, it is well known, delivered and publiſhed a great many homilies, or ſermons, upon the goſpels and the Acts of the apoſtles.

It is needleſs to bring down this article lower; but it is of importance to add, that there is no example of Chriſtian writers of the three firſt centuries compoſing comments upon any other books than thoſe which are found in the New Teſtament, except the ſingle one, of Clement of Alexandria commenting upon a book called the Revelation of Peter.

Of the *ancient verſions* of the New Teſtament, one of the moſt valuable is the Syriac. Syriac was the language of Paleſtine when Chriſtianity was there firſt eſtabliſhed. And although the books of ſcripture were written in Greek, for the purpoſe of a more extended circulation than within the precincts of Judea, yet it is probable that they would ſoon be tranſlated into the vulgar language of the country where the religion firſt prevailed. Accordingly a Syriac tranſlation is now extant, all along, ſo far as appears, uſed by the inhabitants of Syria, bearing many internal marks of high antiquity, ſupported in its pretenſions by the uniform tradition of the Eaſt, and confirmed by the diſcovery of many very ancient manuſcripts in the libraries of Europe. It is about 200 years ſince a biſhop of Antioch ſent a copy of this tranſlation into Europe to be printed; and this ſeems to be the firſt time that the tranſlation became generally known to theſe parts of the world. The biſhop of Antioch's teſtament was found to contain all our books, except the ſecond epiſtle of Peter, the ſecond and third of John, and the Revelation; which books however, have ſince been diſcovered in that language in ſome ancient manuſcripts of Europe. But in this collection, no other book, beſide what is in ours, appears ever to have had a place. And, which is very worthy of obſervation, the text, though preſerved in a remote country, and without communication with ours, differs from ours very little, and in nothing that is important.[a]

SECT.

[a] Jones on the canon, vol. I. c. xiv.

## SECT. VII.

*Our ſcriptures were received by ancient Chriſtians of different ſects and perſuaſions, by many heretics as well as Catholics, and were uſually appealed to by both ſides in the controverſies which aroſe in thoſe days.*

THE three moſt ancient topics of controverſy amongſt Chriſtians, were the authority of the Jewiſh inſtitution, the origin of evil, and the nature of Chriſt. Upon the firſt of theſe, we find, in very early times, one claſs of heretics rejecting the Old Teſtament entirely, another contending for the obligation of its law, in all its parts, throughout its whole extent, and over every one who ſought acceptance with God. Upon the two latter ſubjects a natural, perhaps, and venial, but a fruitleſs, eager and impatient curioſity, prompted by the philoſophy, and by the ſcholaſtic habits, of the age, which carried men much into bold hypotheſes and conjectural ſolutions, raiſed amongſt ſome who profeſſed Chriſtianity very wild and unfounded opinions. I think there is no reaſon to believe, that the number of theſe bore any conſiderable proportion to the body of the Chriſtian church; and amidſt the diſputes, which ſuch opinions neceſſarily occaſioned, it is a great ſatisfaction to perceive, what in a vaſt plurality of inſtances we do perceive, all ſides recurring to the ſame ſcriptures.

I.[a] Baſilides lived near the age of the apoſtles, about the year 120, or, perhaps, ſooner.[b] He rejected the Jewiſh inſtitution, not as ſpurious, but as proceeding from a being inferior to the true God; and in other reſpects advanced a ſcheme of theology widely different from the general doctrine of the Chriſtian church, and which, as it gained

[a] The materials of the former part of this ſection are taken from Dr. Lardner's hiſtory of the heretics of the two firſt centuries publiſhed ſince his death, with additions by the Rev. Mr. Hogg of Exeter, and inſerted into the ninth volume of his works, of the edition of 1788.

[b] Vol. IX. p. 271.

gained over ſome diſciples, was warmly oppoſed by Chriſtian writers of the ſecond and third century. In theſe writings there is poſitive evidence, that Baſilides received the goſpel of Matthew; and there is no ſufficient proof that he rejected any of the other three; on the contrary, it appears that he wrote a commentary upon the goſpel, ſo copious, as to be divided into twenty-four books.[a]

II. The Valentinians appeared about the ſame time.[b] Their hereſy conſiſted in certain notions concerning angelic natures, which can hardly be rendered intelligible to a modern reader. They ſeem, however, to have acquired as much importance as any of the ſeparatiſts of that early age. Of this ſect, Irenæus, who wrote A. D. 172, expreſsly records, that they endeavoured to fetch arguments for their opinions, from the evangelic and apoſtolic writings.[c] Heracleon, one of the moſt celebrated of the ſect, and who lived probably ſo early as the year 125, wrote commentaries upon Luke and John.[d] Some obſervations alſo of his upon Matthew are preſerved by Origen.[e] Nor is there any reaſon to doubt, that he received the whole New Teſtament.

III. The Carpocratians were alſo an early hereſy, little, if at all, later than the two preceding.[f] Some of their opinions reſembled, what we at this day mean by Socinianiſm. With reſpect to the ſcriptures, they are ſpecifically charged by Irenæus and by Epiphanius, with endeavouring to pervert a paſſage in Matthew, which amounts to a poſitive proof, that they received that goſpel.[g] Negatively, they are not accuſed by their adverſaries, of rejecting any part of the New Teſtament.

IV. The Sethians, A. D. 150;[h] the Montaniſts, A. D. 156;[i] the Marcoſians, A. D. 160;[k] Hermogenes, A. D. 180;[l] Praxias, A. D. 196;[m] Artemon, A. D. 200;

[a] Ib. p. 305, 306. [b] Vol. IX. ed. 1788, p. 350, 351.
[c] Vol. I. p. 383. [d] Vol. IX. ed. 1788, p. 352.
[e] Ib. 353. [f] Ib. 309. [g] Ib. 318.
[h] Vol. IX. ed. 1788, p. 455. [i] Ib. p. 482.
[k] Ib. p. 348. [l] Ib. p. 473. [m] Ib. p. 433.

200;[a] Theodotus, A. D. 200; all included under the denomination of heretics, and all engaged in controverſies with Catholic Chriſtians, received the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament.

V. Tatian, who lived in the year 172, went into many extravagant opinions, was the founder of a ſect called Encratites, and was deeply involved in diſputes with the Chriſtians of that age; yet Tatian ſo received the four goſpels, as to compoſe a harmony from them.

VI. From a writer, quoted by Euſebius, of about the year 200, it is apparent that they, who, at that time, contended for the mere humanity of Chriſt, argued from the ſcriptures; for they are accuſed by this writer, of making alterations in their copies, in order to favour their opinions.[b]

VII. Origen's ſentiments excited great controverſies; the biſhops of Rome and Alexandria, and many others, condemning, the biſhops of the Eaſt eſpouſing them; yet there is not the ſmalleſt queſtion, but that both the advocates and adverſaries of theſe opinions acknowledged the ſame authority of ſcripture. In his time, which the reader will remember was about one hundred and fifty years after the ſcriptures were publiſhed, many diſſenſions ſubſiſted amongſt Chriſtians, with which they were reproached by Celſus, yet Origen, who has recorded this accuſation without contradicting it, nevertheleſs teſtifies "that the four goſpels were received without diſpute by the whole church of God under heaven."[c]

VIII. Paul of Samoſata, about thirty years after Origen, ſo diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the controverſy concerning the nature of Chriſt, as to be the ſubject of two councils or ſynods, aſſembled at Antioch, upon his opinions. Yet he is not charged by his adverſaries with rejecting any book of the New Teſtament. On the contrary, Epiphanius, who wrote a hiſtory of heretics a hundred years afterwards, ſays that Paul endeavoured to ſupport his doctrine by texts of

[a] Ib. p. 466. [b] Ib. Vol. III. p. 46.
[c] Ib. vol. IV. p. 642.

of ſcripture. And Vicentius Lirinenſis, A. D. 434, ſpeaking of Paul and other heretics of the ſame age, has theſe words: "Here, perhaps, ſome one may aſk, whether heretics alſo urge the teſtimony of ſcripture. They urge it indeed, explicitly and vehemently; for you may ſee them flying through every book of the ſacred law."[a]

IX. A controverſy at the ſame time exiſted with the Noetians or Sabellians, who ſeem to have gone into the oppoſite extreme from that of Paul of Samoſata, and his followers. Yet, according to the expreſs teſtimony of Epiphanius, Sabellius received all the ſcriptures. And with both ſects Catholic writers conſtantly allege the ſcriptures, and reply to the arguments which their opponents drew from particular texts. This is a proof, that parties, who were the moſt oppoſite and irreconcileable to one another, acknowledged the authority of ſcripture, and with equal deference.

X. And as a general teſtimony to the ſame point, may be produced what was ſaid by one of the biſhops of the council of Carthage, which was holden a little before this time. "I am of opinion that blaſphemous and wicked heretics, who *pervert* the ſacred and adorable words of the ſcriptures, ſhould be execrated."[b] Undoubtedly what they perverted, they received.

XI. The Millenium, Novatianiſm, the baptiſm of heretics, the keeping of Eaſter, engaged alſo the attention, and divided the opinions of Chriſtians, at and before that time, (and, by the way, it may be obſerved, that ſuch diſputes, though on ſome accounts to be blamed, ſhowed how much men were in earneſt upon the ſubject) yet every one appealed for the grounds of his opinion to ſcripture authority. Dionyſius of Alexandria, who flouriſhed A. D. 247, deſcribing a conference, or public diſputation, with the Millenarians of Egypt, confeſſes of them, though their adverſary, "that they embraced whatever could be made out by good

[a] Ib. vol. XI. p. 158. [b] Ib. p. 839.

good arguments from the holy ſcriptures."[a] Novatus, A. D. 251, diſtinguiſhed by ſome rigid ſentiments concerning the reception of thoſe who had lapſed, and the founder of a numerous ſect, in his few remaining works quotes the goſpel with the ſame reſpect as other Chriſtians did; and concerning his followers the teſtimony of Socrates, who wrote about the year 440, is poſitive, viz. "that, in the diſputes between the Catholics and them, each ſide endeavoured to ſupport itſelf by the authority of the divine ſcriptures."[b]

XII. The Donatiſts, who ſprung up in the year 328, uſed the ſame ſcriptures as we do. "Produce (ſaith Auguſtine) ſome proof from the ſcriptures, whoſe authority is common to us both."[c]

XIII. It is perfectly notorious, that, in the Arian controverſy, which aroſe ſoon after the year 300, both ſides appealed to the ſame ſcriptures, and with equal profeſſions of deference and regard. The Arians, in their council of Antioch, A. D. 341, pronounce that, "if any one, contrary to the ſound doctrine of the ſcriptures, ſay that the Son is a creature, as one of the creatures, let him be anathema."[d] They and the Athanaſians mutually accuſe each other of uſing *unſcriptural* phraſes, which was a mutual acknowledgment of the concluſive authority of ſcripture.

XIV. The Priſcillianiſts, A. D. 378,[e] the Pelagians, A. D. 405,[f] received the ſame ſcriptures as we do.

XV. The teſtimony of Chryſoſtom, who lived near the year 400, is ſo poſitive in affirmation of the propoſition which we maintain, that it may form a proper concluſion of the argument. "The general reception of the goſpels is a proof that their hiſtory is true and conſiſtent; for ſince the writing of the goſpels, many hereſies have ariſen, holding opinions contrary to what is contained in them, who

[a] Ib. vol. IV. p. 666. [b] Ib. vol. V. p. 105.
[c] Ib. vol. VII. p. 243. [d] Ib. p. 277.
[e] Ib. vol. IX. p. 325. [f] Ib. vol. XI. p. 52.

who yet receive the goſpels either entire or in part."[a] I am not moved by what may ſeem a deduction from Chryſoſtom's teſtimony, the words "entire or in part;" for, if all the parts, which were ever queſtioned in our goſpels, were given up, it would not affect the miraculous origin of the religion in the ſmalleſt degree: *e. g.*

Cerinthus is ſaid by Epiphanius to have received the goſpel of Matthew, but not entire. What the omiſſions were does not appear. The common opinion, that he rejected the two firſt chapters, ſeems to have been a miſtake.[b] It is agreed, however, by all who have given any account of Cerinthus, that he taught that the Holy Ghoſt (whether he meant by that name a perſon or a power) deſcended upon Jeſus at his baptiſm; that Jeſus from this time performed many miracles, and that he appeared after his death. He muſt have retained therefore the eſſential parts of the hiſtory.

Of all the ancient heretics, the moſt extraordinary was Marcion.[c] One of his tenets was the rejection of the Old Teſtament, as proceeding from an inferior and imperfect deity; and in purſuance of this hypotheſis, he eraſed from the New, and that, as it ſhould ſeem, without entering into any critical reaſons, every paſſage which recognized the Jewiſh ſcriptures. He ſpared not a text which contradicted his opinion. It is reaſonable to believe, that Marcion treated books as he treated texts: yet this raſh and wild controverſialiſt publiſhed a recenſion, or chaſtiſed edition, of St. Luke's goſpel, containing the leading facts, and all which is neceſſary to authenticate the religion. This example affords proof, that there were always ſome points, and thoſe the main points, which neither wildneſs nor raſhneſs, neither the fury of oppoſition nor the intemperance of controverſy, would venture to call in queſtion. There is no reaſon to believe that Marcion, though full of reſentment againſt the Catholic Chriſtians, ever charged them with forging their books. "The Goſpel of St. Matthew,

[a] Ib. vol. X. p. 316. [b] Ib. vol. IX. ed. 1788, p. 322.
[c] Ib. ſect. ii. c. x. Alſo Michael. vol. I. c. 1. ſect. xviii.

Matthew, the epiſtle to the Hebrews, with thoſe of St. Peter and St. James, as well as the Old Teſtament in general, (he ſaid) were writings not for Chriſtians but for Jews."[a] This declaration ſhows the ground upon which Marcion proceeded in his mutilation of the ſcriptures, viz. his diſlike of the paſſages or the books. Marcion flouriſhed about the year 130.

Dr. Lardner, in his General Review, ſums up this head of evidence in the following words: "Noetus, Paul of Samoſata, Sabellius, Marcellus, Photinus, the Novatians, Donatiſts, Manicheans,[b] Priſcillianiſts, beſide Artemon, the Audians, the Arians, and divers others, all received moſt or all the ſame books of the New Teſtament which the Catholics received; and agreed in a like reſpect for them as writ by the apoſtles, or their diſciples and companions."[c]

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## SECT. VIII.

*The four Goſpels, the Acts of the Apoſtles, thirteen Epiſtles of St. Paul, the firſt Epiſtle of John, and the firſt of Peter, were received without doubt by thoſe who doubted concerning the other books, which are included in our preſent canon.*

I STATE this propoſition, becauſe, if made out, it ſhows that the authenticity of their books was a ſubject amongſt the early Chriſtians of conſideration and inquiry; and that, where there was cauſe of doubt, they did doubt; a circumſtance which ſtrengthens very much their teſtimony

[a] I have tranſcribed this ſentence from Michaelis, (page 38) who has not, however, referred to the authority upon which he attributes theſe words to Marcion.

[b] This muſt be with an exception, however, of Fauſtus, who lived ſo late as the year 384.

[c] Ib. vol. XII. p. 12.—Dr Lardner's future inquiries ſupplied him with many other inſtances.

ny to ſuch books as were received by them with full acquieſcence.

I. Jerome, in his account of Caius, who was probably a preſbyter of Rome, and who flouriſhed near the year 200, records of him, that, reckoning up only thirteen epiſtles of Paul, he ſays the fourteenth, which is inſcribed to the Hebrews, is not his; and then Jerome adds, "With the Romans to this day it is not looked upon as Paul's." This agrees, in the main, with the account given by Euſebius of the ſame ancient author and his work; except that Euſebius delivers his own remark in more guarded terms, "and indeed to this very time, by ſome of the Romans, this epiſtle is not thought to be the apoſtle's."[a]

II. Origen, about twenty years after Caius, quoting the epiſtle to the Hebrews, obſerves that ſome might diſpute the authority of that epiſtle, and therefore proceeds to quote to the ſame point, as *undoubted* books of ſcripture, the goſpel of St. Matthew, the Acts of the apoſtles, and Paul's firſt epiſtle to the Theſſalonians.[b] And in another place this author ſpeaks of the epiſtle to the Hebrews thus: "The account come down to us is various, ſome ſaying that Clement, who was biſhop of Rome, wrote this epiſtle; others, that it was Luke, the ſame who writ the goſpel and the Acts." Speaking alſo in the ſame paragraph of Peter, "Peter (ſays he) has left one epiſtle acknowledged; let it be granted likewiſe that he wrote a ſecond, for it is doubted of." And of John, "He has alſo left one epiſtle, of a very few lines: grant alſo a ſecond and a third, for all do not allow theſe to be genuine." Now let it be noted, that Origen, who thus diſcriminates, and thus confeſſes his own doubts, and the doubts which ſubſiſted in his time, expreſsly witneſſes concerning the four goſpels, "that they alone are received without diſpute by the whole church of God under heaven."[c]

III. Dyoniſius of Alexandria, in the year 247, doubts concerning the book of Revelation, whether it was written by St. John; ſtates the grounds of his doubt; repreſents

[a] Ib. vol. III. p. 240. [b] Ib. p. 246. [c] Ib. p. 234.

ſents the diverſity of opinion concerning it, in his own time, and before his time.[a] Yet the ſame Dyoniſius uſes and collates the four goſpels, in a manner which ſhows that he entertained not the ſmalleſt ſuſpicion of *their* authority, and in a manner alſo which ſhows, that they, and they alone, were received as authentic hiſtories of Chriſt.[b]

IV. But this ſection may be ſaid to have been framed on purpoſe to introduce to the reader two remarkable paſſages, extant in Euſebius's eccleſiaſtical hiſtory. The firſt paſſage opens with theſe words—"Let us obſerve the writings of the apoſtle John, which are *uncontradicted*; and, firſt of all, muſt be mentioned, as acknowledged of all, the goſpel according to him, well known to all the churches under heaven." The author then proceeds to relate the occaſions of writing the goſpels, and the reaſons for placing St. John's the laſt, manifeſtly ſpeaking throughout of all the four as parallel in their authority, and in the certainty of their original.[c] The ſecond paſſage is taken from a chapter, the title of which is, "Of the Scriptures *univerſally acknowledged*, and of thoſe that are not ſuch." Euſebius begins his enumeration in the following manner:—"In the firſt place, are to be ranked the ſacred four goſpels, then the book of the Acts of the apoſtles, after that are to be reckoned the epiſtles of Paul. In the next place, that called the firſt epiſtle of John, and the epiſtle of Peter, are to be eſteemed authentic. After this is to be placed, if it be thought fit, the Revelation of John, about which we ſhall obſerve the different opinions at proper ſeaſons. Of the controverted, but yet well known, or approved by the moſt, are that called the epiſtle of James, and that of Jude, and the ſecond of Peter, and the ſecond and third of John, whether they are written by the evangeliſt, or another of the ſame name."[d] He then proceeds to reckon up five others, not in our canon, which he calls in one place

[a] Ib. vol. IV. p. 670. [b] Ib. p. 661.
[c] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 90. [d] Ib. p. 98.

place *ſpurious*, in another *controverted*, meaning, as appears to me, nearly the ſame thing by theſe two words.[a]

It is manifeſt from this paſſage, that the four goſpels, and the Acts of the apoſtles, (the parts of ſcripture with which our concern principally lies) were acknowledged without diſpute even by thoſe who raiſed objections, or entertained doubts, about ſome other parts of the ſame collection. But the paſſage proves ſomething more than this. The author was extremely converſant in the writings of Chriſtians, which had been publiſhed from the commencement of the inſtitution to his own time; and it was from theſe writings that he drew his knowledge of the character and reception of the books in queſtion. That Euſebius recurred to this medium of information, and that he had examined with attention this ſpecies of proof, is ſhewn, firſt, by a paſſage in the very chapter we are quoting, in which, ſpeaking of the books which he calls ſpurious, "None (he ſays) of the eccleſiaſtical writers, in the ſucceſſion of the apoſtles, have vouchſafed to make any mention of them in their writings;" and ſecondly, by another paſſage of the ſame work, wherein, ſpeaking of the firſt epiſtle of Peter, "This (he ſays) the preſbyters of ancient times have quoted in their writings as undoubtedly genuine;"[b] and then, ſpeaking of ſome other writings bearing the name of Peter, "We know (he ſays) that they have not been delivered down to us in the number of Catholic writings, foraſmuch as no eccleſiaſtical writer of the ancients, or of our times, has made uſe of teſtimonies out of them." "But in the progreſs of this hiſtory," the author proceeds, "we ſhall make it our buſineſs to ſhow, together with the ſucceſſions from the apoſtles, what eccleſiaſtical writers, in every age, have uſed ſuch writings as theſe which

[a] That Euſebius could not intend, by the word rendered "ſpurious," what we at preſent mean by it, is evident from a clauſe in this very chapter, where, ſpeaking of the goſpels of Peter and Thomas, and Matthias and ſome others, he ſays, "They are not ſo much as to be reckoned among the *ſpurious*, but are to be rejected, as altogether abſurd and impious." Vol. VIII. p. 98.

[b] Ib. p. 99.

which are contradicted, and what they have ſaid, with regard to the ſcriptures received in the New Teſtament, *and acknowledged by all*, and with regard to thoſe which are not ſuch."[a]

After this it is reaſonable to believe, that, when Euſebius ſtates the four goſpels, and the Acts of the apoſtles, as uncontradicted, unconteſted, and acknowledged by all; and when he places them in oppoſition, not only to thoſe which were ſpurious in our ſenſe of that term, but to thoſe which were controverted, and even to thoſe which were well known and approved by many, yet doubted of by ſome; he repreſents, not only the ſenſe of his own age, but the reſult of the evidence, which the writings of prior ages, from the apoſtle's time to his own, had furniſhed to his inquiries. The opinion of Euſebius and his contemporaries, appears to have been founded upon the teſtimony of writers, whom they *then* called ancient; and we may obſerve, that ſuch of the works of theſe writers, as have come down to our times, entirely confirm the judgment, and ſupport the diſtinction which Euſebius propoſes. The books, which he calls "books univerſally acknowledged," are in fact uſed and quoted, in the remaining works of Chriſtian writers, during the 250 years between the apoſtle's time and that of Euſebius, much more frequently than, and in a different manner from thoſe, the authority of which, he tells us, was diſputed.

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## SECT. IX.

*Our hiſtorical ſcriptures were attacked by the early adverſaries of Chriſtianity, as containing the accounts upon which the religion was founded.*

I. NEAR the middle of the ſecond century, Celſus, a heathen philoſopher, wrote a profeſſed treatiſe againſt



[a] Ib. p. 111.

Chriſtianity. To this treatiſe, Origen, who came about fifty years after him, publiſhed an anſwer, in which he frequently recites his adverſary's words and arguments. The work of Celſus is loſt ; but that of Origen remains. Origen appears to have given us the words of Celſus, where he profeſſes to give them, very faithfully ; and, amongſt other reaſons for thinking ſo, this is one, that the objection, as ſtated by him from Celſus, is ſometimes ſtronger than his own anſwer. I think it alſo probable that Origen, in his anſwer, has retailed a large portion of the work of Celſus : " That it may not be ſuſpected (he ſays) that we paſs by any chapters, becauſe we have no anſwers at hand, I have thought it beſt, according to my ability, to confute every thing propoſed by him, not ſo much obſerving the natural order of things, as the order which he has taken himſelf."[a]

Celſus wrote about 100 years after the goſpels were publiſhed ; and therefore any notice of theſe books from him are extremely important for their antiquity. They are, however, rendered more ſo by the character of the author ; for the reception, credit, and notoriety of theſe books muſt have been well eſtabliſhed amongſt Chriſtians, to have made them ſubjects of animadverſion and oppoſition by ſtrangers and by enemies. It evinces the truth of what Chryſoſtom, two centuries afterwards, obſerved, that " the goſpels, when written, were not hid in a corner, or buried in obſcurity, but they were made known to all the world, before enemies as well as others, even as they are now."

1. Celſus, or the Jew whom he perſonates, uſes theſe words—" I could ſay many things concerning the affairs of Jeſus, and thoſe, too, different from thoſe written by the diſciples of Jeſus, but I purpoſely omit them."[b] Upon this paſſage it has been rightly obſerved, that it is not eaſy to believe, that if Celſus could have contradicted the diſciples upon good evidence in any material point, he would

[a] Or. cont. Celſ. l. i. ſect. 41.

[b] Lardner's Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtim. vol. II. p. 274.

would have omitted to do ſo ; and that the aſſertion is, what Origen calls it, a mere oratorical flouriſh.

It is ſufficient however to prove, that, in the time of Celſus, there were books well known, and allowed to be written by the diſciples of Jeſus, which books contained a hiſtory of him. By the term *diſciples*, Celſus does not mean the followers of Jeſus in general, for them he calls Chriſtians, or believers, or the like, but thoſe who had been taught by Jeſus himſelf, i. e. his apoſtles and companions.

2. In another paſſage, Celſus accuſes the Chriſtians of altering the goſpel.[a] The accuſation refers to ſome varieties in the readings of particular paſſages ; for Celſus goes on to object, that when they are preſſed hard, and one reading has been confuted, they diſown that, and fly to another. We cannot perceive from Origen that Celſus ſpecified any particular inſtances, and without ſuch ſpecification the charge is of no value. But the true concluſion to be drawn from it is, that there were in the hands of the Chriſtians, hiſtories, which were even then of ſome ſtanding ; for various readings and corruptions do not take place in recent productions.

The former quotation, the reader will remember, proved that theſe books were compoſed by the diſciples of Jeſus, ſtrictly ſo called ; the preſent quotation ſhews, that though objections were taken by the adverſaries of the religion to the integrity of theſe books, there was none to their genuineneſs.

3. In a third paſſage, the Jew, whom Celſus introduces, ſhuts up an argument in this manner :—" Theſe things then we have alleged to you out *of your own writings*, not needing any other weapons."[b] It is manifeſt that this boaſt proceeds upon the ſuppoſition that the books, over which the writer affects to triumph, poſſeſſed an authority, by which Chriſtians confeſſed themſelves to be bound.

4. That the books to which Celſus refers were no other than our preſent goſpels, is made out by his alluſions to various

[a] Ib. p. 275. [b] Ib. p. 276.

various paſſages ſtill found in theſe goſpels. Celſus takes notice of the *genealogies*, which fixes two of theſe goſpels; of the precepts, reſiſt not him that injures you, and, if a man ſtrike thee on the one cheek, offer to him the other alſo;[a] of the woes denounced by Chriſt; his predictions; his ſaying that it is impoſſible to ſerve two maſters;[b] of the purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the reed in his hand; of the blood that flowed from the body of Jeſus upon the croſs,[c] which circumſtance is recorded by John alone; and (what is *inſtar omnium* for the purpoſe for which we produce it) of the difference in the accounts given of the reſurrection by the evangeliſts, ſome mentioning two angels at the ſepulchre, others only one.[d]

It is extremely material to remark, that Celſus not only perpetually referred to the accounts of Chriſt contained in the four goſpels,[e] but that he referred to no other accounts; that he founded none of his objections to Chriſtianity upon any thing delivered in ſpurious goſpels.

II. What Celſus was in the ſecond century, Porphyry became in the third. His work, which was a large and formal treatiſe againſt the Chriſtian religion, is not extant. We muſt be content therefore to gather his objections from Chriſtian writers, who have noticed in order to anſwer them; and enough remains of this ſpecies of information, to prove completely, that Porphyry's animadverſions were directed againſt the contents of our preſent goſpels, and of the Acts of the apoſtles; Porphyry conſidering, that to overthrow them was to overthrow the religion. Thus he objects to the repetition of a generation in St. Matthew's genealogy; to Matthew's call; to the quotation of a text from Iſaiah, which is found in a pſalm aſcribed to Aſaph; to the calling of the lake of Tiberias a ſea; to the expreſſion in St. Matthew, "the abomination of deſolation;" to the variation in Matthew and Mark

a Ib. p. 276. b Ib. p. 277.
c Ib. p. 280, 281. d Ib. p. 282.

e The particulars, of which the above are only a few, are well collected by Mr. Bryant, p. 140.

Mark upon the text, "the voice of one crying in the wilderneſs," Matthew citing it from Iſaias, Mark from the prophets; to John's application of the term "word;" to Chriſt's change of intention about going up to the feaſt of tabernacles (John vii. 8) to the judgment denounced by St. Peter upon Ananias and Sapphira, which he calls an imprecation of death.[a]

The inſtances here alleged ſerve, in ſome meaſure, to ſhow the nature of Porphyry's objections, and prove that Porphyry had read the goſpels with that ſort of attention, which a writer would employ, who regarded them as the depoſitaries of the religion which he attacked. Beſide theſe ſpecifications, there exiſts in the writings of ancient Chriſtians general evidence, that the places of ſcripture, upon which Porphyry had remarked, were very numerous.

In ſome of the above cited examples, Porphyry, ſpeaking of St. Matthew, calls him your evangeliſt: he alſo uſes the term evangeliſts in the plural number. What was ſaid of Celſus is true likewiſe of Porphyry, that it does not appear that he conſidered any hiſtory of Chriſt, except theſe, as having authority with Chriſtians.

III. A third great writer againſt the Chriſtian religion was the Emperor Julian, whoſe work was compoſed about a century after that of Porphyry.

In various long extracts, tranſcribed from this work by Cyril and Jerome, it appears,[b] that Julian noticed by name Matthew and Luke, in the difference between their genealogies of Chriſt; that he objected to Matthew's application of the prophecy, "Out of Egypt have I called my ſon," (ii. 15) and to that of "a virgin ſhall conceive;" (i. 22) that he recited ſayings of Chriſt, and various paſſages of his hiſtory, in the very words of the evangeliſts; in particular, that Jeſus healed lame and blind people, and exorciſed demoniacs, in the villages of Bethſaida and Bethany; that he alleged that none of Chriſt's diſciples aſcribed to him the creation of the world, except John; that neither

[a] Jewiſh and Heathen Teſt. vol. III. p. 166, et ſeq.

[b] Ib. vol. IV. p. 77, et ſeq.

neither Paul, nor Matthew, nor Luke, nor Mark, have dared to call Jeſus, God; that John wrote later than the other evangeliſts, and at a time when a great number of men in the cities of Greece and Italy were converted; that he alludes to the converſion of Cornelius and of Sergius Paulus, to Peter's viſion, to the circular letter ſent by the apoſtles and elders at Jeruſalem, which are all recorded in the Acts of the apoſtles: by which quoting of the four goſpels and the Acts of the apoſtles, and by quoting no other, Julian ſhows that theſe were the hiſtorical books, and the only hiſtorical books, received by Chriſtians as of authority, and as the authentic memoirs of Jeſus Chriſt, of his apoſtles, and of the doctrines taught by them. But Julian's teſtimony does ſomething more than repreſent the judgment of the Chriſtian church in his time. It diſcovers alſo his own. He himſelf expreſsly ſtates the early date of theſe records. He all along ſuppoſes, he no where attempts to queſtion, their genuineneſs.

The argument in favour of the books of the New Teſtament, drawn from the notice taken of their contents by the early writers againſt the religion, is very conſiderable. It ſhows that the accounts, which Chriſtians had then, were the accounts which we have now; that our preſent ſcriptures were theirs. It ſhows, moreover, that neither Celſus in the ſecond, Porphyry in the third, nor Julian in the fourth century, ſuſpected the authenticity of theſe books, or ever inſinuated that Chriſtians were miſtaken in the authors to whom they aſcribed them. Not one of them expreſſed an opinion upon this ſubject different from that which was held by Chriſtians. And when we conſider how much it would have availed them to have caſt a doubt upon this point, if they could; and how ready they ſhowed themſelves to be to take every advantage in their power; and that they were all men of learning and inquiry; their conceſſion, or rather their ſuffrage, upon the ſubject, is extremely valuable.

In the caſe of Porphyry, it is made ſtill ſtronger, by the conſideration that he did in fact ſupport himſelf by this

ſpecies

ſpecies of objection, when he ſaw any room for it, or when his acuteneſs could ſupply any pretence for alleging it. The prophecy of Daniel he attacked upon this very ground of ſpuriouſneſs, inſiſting that it was written after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and maintains his charge of forgery by ſome, far-fetched indeed, but very ſubtle criticiſms. Concerning the writings of the New Teſtament, no trace of this ſuſpicion is any where to be found in him.[a]

## SECT. X.

*Formal catalogues of authentic ſcriptures were publiſhed, in all which our preſent ſacred hiſtories were included.*

THIS ſpecies of evidence comes later than the reſt, as it was not natural that catalogues of any particular claſs of books ſhould be put forth, until Chriſtian writings became numerous, or until ſome writings ſhowed themſelves, claiming titles which did not belong to them, and thereby rendering it neceſſary to ſeparate books of authority from others. But, when it does appear, it is extremely ſatisfactory; the catalogues, though numerous and made in countries at a wide diſtance from one another, differing very little, differing in nothing which is material, and all containing the four goſpels. To this laſt article there is no exception.

I. In the writings of Origen which remain, and in ſome extracts preſerved by Euſebius, from works of his which are now loſt, there are enumerations of the books of ſcripture, in which the four goſpels and the Acts of the apoſtles are diſtinctly and honourably ſpecified, and in which no books appear beſide what are now received.[b] The reader, by

[a] Michaelis's Introduction to the New Teſt. vol. I. p. 43. Marſh's Tranſlation.

[b] Vol. III. p. 234, et ſeq. vol. VIII. p. 196.

by this time, will eaſily recollect that the date of Origen's work is A. D. 230.

II. Athanaſius, about a century afterwards, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Teſtament in form, containing our ſcriptures and no others; of which he ſays, "In theſe alone the doctrine of religion is taught; let no man add to them, or take any thing from them." [a]

III. About 20 years after Athanaſius, Cyril, biſhop of Jeruſalem, ſet forth a catalogue of the books of ſcripture, publickly read at that time in the church of Jeruſalem, exactly the ſame as ours, except that the "Revelation" is omitted.[b]

IV. And, fifteen years after Cyril, the Council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue of canonical ſcripture, like Cyril's, the ſame as ours, with the omiſſion of the "Revelation."[a]

V. Catalogues now become frequent. Within thirty years from the laſt date, that is, from the year 363 to near the concluſion of the fourth century, we have catalogues by Epiphanius,[c] by Gregory Nazienzen,[d] by Philaſter, biſhop of Breſcia in Italy,[e] by Amphilochius, biſhop of Iconium, all, as they are ſometimes called, clean catalogues, (that is, they admit no books into the number beſide what we now receive) and all, for every purpoſe of hiſtoric evidence, the ſame as ours.[f]

VI. Within the ſame period, Jerome, the moſt learned Chriſtian writer of his age, delivered a catalogue of the books of the Tew Teſtament, recognizing every book now received, with the intimation of a doubt concerning the epiſtle to the Hebrews alone, and taking not the leaſt notice of any book which is not now received.[g]

VII. Contemporary

[a] Ib. vol. VIII. p. 223. [b] Ib. p. 270. [c] Ib. p. 368.
[d] Vol. IX. p. 132. [e] Ib. p. 373.

[f] Epiphanius omits the Acts of the apoſtles. This muſt have been an accidental miſtake either in him or in ſome copyiſt of his work, for he elſewere expreſsly refers to this book, and aſcribes it to Luke.

[g] Vol. X. p. 77.

VII. Contemporary with Jerome, who lived in Paleſtine, was St. Auguſtine in Africa, who publiſhed likewiſe a catalogue without joining to the ſcriptures, as books of authority, any other eccleſiaſtical writing whatever, and without omitting one which we at this day acknowledge.[a]

VIII. And with theſe concurs another contemporary writer, Rufin, preſbyter of Aquileia, whoſe catalogue, like theirs, is perfect and unmixed, and concludes with theſe remarkable words: "Theſe are the volumes which the fathers have included in the canon, and out of which they would have us prove the doctrine of our faith."[b]

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## SECT. XI.

*Theſe propoſitions cannot be predicated of any of thoſe books, which are commonly called apocryphal books of the New Teſtament.*

I DO not know that the objection taken from apocryphal writings is at preſent much relied upon by ſcholars. But there are many, who, hearing that various goſpels exiſted in ancient times under the names of the apoſtles, may have taken up a notion, that the ſelection of our preſent goſpels from the reſt, was rather an arbitrary or accidental choice, than founded in any clear and certain cauſe of preference. To theſe it may be very uſeful to know the truth of the caſe. I obſerve therefore,

I. That, beſide our goſpels and the Acts of the apoſtles, no Chriſtian hiſtory, claiming to be written by an apoſtle or apoſtolical man, is quoted within three hundred years after the birth of Chriſt, by any writer now extant, or known; or, if quoted, is not quoted with marks of cenſure and rejection.

I have not advanced this aſſertion without inquiry; and I doubt not, but that the paſſages cited by Mr. Jones and



[a] Ib. p. 213. [b] Ib. p. 187.

Dr. Lardner, under the ſeveral titles which the apocryphal books bear; or a reference to the places where they are mentioned, as collected in a very accurate table, publiſhed in the year 1773 by the Rev. J. Atkinſon; will make out the truth of the propoſition to the ſatisfaction of every fair and competent judgment. If there be any book which may ſeem to form an exception to the obſervation, it is a Hebrew goſpel, which was circulated under the various titles of the goſpel according to the Hebrews, the goſpel of the Nazarenes, of the Ebionites, ſometimes called of the twelve, by ſome aſcribed to St. Matthew. This goſpel is *once*, and only *once*, cited by Clement Alexandrinus, who lived, the reader will remember, in the latter part of the ſecond century, and which ſame Clement quotes one or other of our four goſpels in almoſt every page of his work. It is alſo twice mentioned by Origen, A. D. 230; and both times with marks of diminution and diſcredit. And this is the ground upon which the exception ſtands. But what is ſtill more material to obſerve, is, that this goſpel, in the main, agreed with our preſent goſpel of St. Matthew. [a]

Now if, with this account of the apocryphal goſpels, we compare what we have read, concerning the canonical ſcriptures in the preceding ſections; or even recollect that general, but well-founded aſſertion of Dr. Lardner's, "that in the remaining works of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, who all lived in the two firſt centuries, there are more, and larger quotations of the ſmall volume of the New Teſtament, than of all the works of Cicero, by writers of all characters, for ſeveral ages;" [b] and if to this we add, that notwithſtanding the loſs of many works of the primitive times of Chriſtianity, we have, within the above-mentioned period, the remains of Chriſtian

[a] In applying to this goſpel, what Jerome in the latter end of the fourth century has mentioned of a Hebrew goſpel, I think it probable that we ſometimes confound it with a Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's goſpel, whether an original or verſion, which was then extant.

[b] Lard. Cred. vol. XII. p. 53.

Chriſtian writers, who lived in Paleſtine, Syria, Aſia Minor, Egypt, the part of Africa that uſed the Latin tongue, in Crete, Greece, Italy and Gaul, in all which remains, references are found to our evangeliſts; I apprehend, that we ſhall perceive a clear and broad line of diviſion, between thoſe writings, and all others pretending to a ſimilar authority.

II. But beſide certain *hiſtories* which aſſumed the names of apoſtles, and which were forgeries properly ſo called, there were ſome other Chriſtian writings, in the whole or in part of an hiſtorical nature, which, though not forgeries, are denominated apocryphal, as being of uncertain, or of no authority.

Of this ſecond claſs of writings, I have found only two, which are noticed by any author of the three firſt centuries, without expreſs terms of condemnation; and theſe are, the one, a book entitled the Preaching of Peter, quoted repeatedly by Clement Alexandrinus, A. D. 196; the other, a book entitled the Revelation of Peter, upon which the above-mentioned Clement Alexandrinus is ſaid, by Euſebius, to have written notes; and which is twice cited in a work ſtill extant, aſcribed to the ſame author.

I conceive therefore, that the propoſition we have before advanced, even after it hath been ſubjected to every exception, of every kind, that can be alleged, ſeparates, by a wide interval, our hiſtorical ſcriptures, from all other writings which profeſs to give an account of the ſame ſubject.

We may be permitted however to add,

1. That there is no evidence, that any ſpurious or apocryphal books whatever, exiſted in the firſt century of the Chriſtian era; in which century all our hiſtorical books are proved to have been extant. "There are no quotations of any ſuch books in the apoſtolical fathers, by whom I mean Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Hermas, Ignatius and Polycarp, whoſe writings reach from about the year of our Lord 70, to the year 108;" (and ſome of whom have quoted each and every one of our hiſtorical ſcriptures)

tures) "I ſay this," adds Dr. Lardner, "becauſe I think it has been proved."[a]

2. Theſe apocryphal writings were not read in the churches of Chriſtians;

3. Were not admitted into their volume;

4. Do not appear in their catalogues;

5. Were not noticed by their adverſaries;

6. Were not alleged by different parties, as of authority in their controverſies;

7. Were not the ſubjects amongſt them, of commentaries, verſions, collations, expoſitions.

Finally; beſide the ſilence of three centuries, or, evidence within that time of their rejection, they were, with a conſent nearly univerſal, reprobated by Chriſtian writers of ſucceeding ages.

Although it be made out by theſe obſervations, that the books in queſtion never obtained any degree of credit and notoriety, which can place them in competition with our ſcriptures, yet it appears from the writings of the fourth century, that many ſuch exiſted in that century, and in the century preceding it. It may be difficult at this diſtance of time to account for their origin. Perhaps the moſt probable explication is, that they were in general compoſed with a deſign of making a profit by the ſale. Whatever treated of the ſubject would find purchaſers. It was an advantage taken of the pious curioſity of unlearned Chriſtians. With a view to the ſame purpoſe, they were many of them adapted to the particular opinions of particular ſects, which would naturally promote their circulation amongſt the favourers of thoſe opinions. After all, they were probably much more obſcure than we imagine. Except the goſpel according to the Hebrews, there is none, of which we hear more, than the goſpel of the Egyptians; yet there is good reaſon to believe that Clement, a preſbyter of Alexandria in Egypt, A. D. 184, and a man of almoſt univerſal reading, had never ſeen it.[b] A goſpel according to Peter, was another of the moſt ancient books of this kind; yet Sera-

pion,

[a] Ib. vol. XII. p. 158. [b] Jones, vol. I. p. 243.

pion, biſhop of Antioch, A. D. 200, had not read it, when he heard of ſuch a book being in the hands of the Chriſtians of Rhoſſus in Cilicia; and ſpeaks of obtaining a ſight of this goſpel from ſome ſectaries who uſed it.[a] Even of the goſpel of the Hebrews, which confeſſedly ſtands at the head of the catalogue, Jerome, at the end of the fourth century, was glad to procure a copy by the favour of the Nazareans of Berea. Nothing of this ſort ever happened, or could have happened, concerning our goſpels.

One thing is obſervable of all the apocryphal Chriſtian writings, that they proceed upon the ſame fundamental hiſtory of Chriſt and his apoſtles, as that which is diſcloſed in our ſcriptures. The miſſion of Chriſt, his power of working miracles, his communication of that power to the apoſtles, his paſſion, death and reſurrection, are aſſumed or aſſerted by every one of them. The names under which ſome of them came forth, are the names of men of eminence in our hiſtories. What theſe books give, are not contradictions, but unauthorized additions. The principal facts are ſuppoſed, the principal agents the ſame; which ſhews that theſe points were too much fixed to be altered or diſputed.

If there be any book of this deſcription, which appears to have impoſed upon ſome conſiderable number of learned Chriſtians, it is the Sybilline oracles; but, when we reflect upon the circumſtances which facilitated that impoſture, we ſhall ceaſe to wonder either at the attempt, or its ſucceſs. It was at that time univerſally underſtood that ſuch a prophetic writing exiſted. Its contents were kept ſecret. This ſituation afforded to ſome one a hint, as well as an opportunity, to give out a writing under this name, favourable to the already eſtabliſhed perſuaſion of Chriſtians, and which writing, by the aid and recommendation of theſe circumſtances, would in ſome degree, it is probable, be received. Of the ancient forgery we know but little; what is now produced could not, in my opin-



[a] Lard. Cred. vol. II. p. 557.

ion, have impoſed upon any one. It is nothing elſe than the goſpel hiſtory, woven into Latin verſe. Perhaps was at firſt, rather a fiction, than a forgery; an exerciſe of ingenuity, more than an attempt to deceive.

## CHAP. X.

THE reader will now be pleaſed to recollect, that the two points which form the ſubject of our preſent diſcuſſion, are, firſt, that the founder of Chriſtianity, his aſſociates, and immediate followers, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings; ſecondly, that they did ſo, in atteſtation of the miraculous hiſtory recorded in our ſcriptures, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of that hiſtory.

The argument, by which theſe two propoſitions have been maintained by us, ſtands thus:

No hiſtorical fact, I apprehend, is more certain, than that the original propagators of Chriſtianity voluntarily ſubjected themſelves to lives of fatigue, danger, and ſuffering, in the proſecution of their undertaking. The nature of the undertaking; the character of the perſons employed in it; the oppoſition of their tenets to the fixed opinions and expectations of the country, in which they firſt advanced them; their undiſſembled condemnation of the religion of all other countries; their total want of power, authority, or force, render it in the higheſt degree probable, that this muſt have been the caſe. The probability is increaſed, by what we know of the fate of the founder of the inſtitution, who was put to death for his attempt; and by what we alſo know, of the cruel treatment of the converts to the inſtitution, within thirty years after its commencement; both which points are atteſted by heathen writers, and being once admitted, leave it very incredible, that the primitive emiſſaries of the religion, who exerciſed their miniſtry, firſt, amongſt the people who had deſtroyed

their

their maſter, and, afterwards, amongſt thoſe who perſecuted their converts, ſhould themſelves eſcape with impunity, or purſue their purpoſe in eaſe and ſafety. This probability, thus ſuſtained by foreign teſtimony, is advanced, I think, to hiſtorical certainty, by the evidence of our own books; by the accounts of a writer, who was the companion of the perſons whoſe ſufferings he relates; by the letters of the perſons themſelves; by predictions of perſecutions aſcribed to the founder of the religion, which predictions would not have been inſerted in his hiſtory, much leſs have been ſtudiouſly dwelt upon, if they had not accorded with the event, and which, even if falſely aſcribed to him, could only have been ſo aſcribed, becauſe the event ſuggeſted them; laſtly, by inceſſant exhortations to fortitude and patience, and by an earneſtneſs, repetition, and urgency upon the ſubject, which were unlikely to have appeared, if there had not been, at the time, ſome extraordinary call for the exerciſe of theſe virtues.

It is made out alſo, I think, with ſufficient evidence, that both the teachers and converts of the religion, in conſequence of their new profeſſion, took up a new courſe of life and behaviour.

The next great queſtion is, what they did this FOR. That it was *for* a miraculous ſtory of ſome kind or other, is to my apprehenſion, extremely manifeſt; becauſe, as to the fundamental article, the deſignation of the perſon, viz. that this particular perſon, Jeſus of Nazareth, ought to be received as the Meſſiah, or as a meſſenger from God, they neither had, nor could have, any thing but miracles to ſtand upon. That the exertions and ſufferings of the apoſtles were *for* the ſtory which we have now, is proved by the conſideration, that this ſtory is tranſmitted to us by two of their own number, and by two others perſonally connected with them; that the particularity of the narratives prove, that the writers claimed to poſſeſs circumſtantial information, that from their ſituation they had full opportunity of acquiring ſuch information, that they certainly,

ly, at leaſt, knew, what their colleagues, their companions, their maſters taught; that each of theſe books contains enough to prove the truth of the religion; that, if any one of them therefore be genuine, it is ſufficient; that the genuineneſs however of all of them, is made out, as well by the general arguments which evince the genuineneſs of the moſt undiſputed remains of antiquity, as alſo by peculiar and ſpecific proofs; viz. by citations from them in writings belonging to a period immediately contiguous to that in which they were publiſhed; by the diſtinguiſhed regard paid by early Chriſtians to the authority of theſe books, (which regard was manifeſted by their collecting of them into a volume, appropriating to that volume titles of peculiar reſpect, tranſlating them into various languages, digeſting them into harmonies, writing commentaries upon them, and ſtill more conſpicuouſly, by the reading of them in their public aſſemblies in all parts of the world) by an univerſal agreement with reſpect to *theſe* books, whilſt doubts were entertained concerning ſome others; by contending ſects appealing to them; by the early adverſaries of the religion not diſputing their genuineneſs, but, on the contrary, treating them as the depoſitaries of the hiſtory upon which the religion was founded; by many formal catalogues of theſe, as of certain and authoritative writings, publiſhed in different and diſtant parts of the Chriſtian world; laſtly, by the abſence or defect of the above-cited topics of evidence, when applied to any other hiſtories of the ſame ſubject.

Theſe are ſtrong arguments to prove, that the books actually proceeded from the authors whoſe names they bear; (and have always borne, for there is not a particle of evidence to ſhow that they ever went under any other) but the ſtrict genuineneſs of the books is perhaps more than is neceſſary to the ſupport of our propoſition. For even ſuppoſing that, by reaſon of the ſilence of antiquity, or the loſs of records, we knew not who were the writers of the four goſpels, yet the fact, that they were received as authentic accounts of the tranſaction upon which the

religion

religion reſted, and were received as ſuch by Chriſtians at or near the age of the apoſtles, by thoſe whom the apoſtle had taught, and by ſocieties which the apoſtles had founded; this fact, I ſay, connected with the conſideration, that they are corroborative of each other's teſtimony, and that they are further corroborated by another contemporary hiſtory, taking up the ſtory where they had left it, and, in a narrative built upon that ſtory, accounting for the riſe and production of changes in the world, the effects of which ſubſiſt at this day; connected, moreover, with the confirmation which they receive, from letters written by the apoſtles themſelves, which both aſſume the ſame general ſtory, and, as often as occaſions lead them to do ſo, allude to particular parts of it; and connected alſo with the reflection, that if the apoſtles delivered any different ſtory, it is loſt; (the preſent and no other being referred to by a ſeries of Chriſtian writers, down from their age to our own; being likewiſe recognized in a variety of inſtitutions, which prevailed, early and univerſally, amongſt the diſciples of the religion) and that ſo great a change, as the oblivion of one ſtory and the ſubſtitution of another, under ſuch circumſtances, could not have taken place; this evidence would be deemed, I apprehend, ſufficient to prove concerning theſe books, that, whoever were the authors of them, they exhibit the ſtory which the apoſtles told, and for which, conſequently, they acted, and they ſuffered.

If it be ſo, the religion muſt be true. Theſe men could not be deceivers. By only not bearing teſtimony, they might have avoided all their ſufferings, and have lived quietly. Would men, in ſuch circumſtances, pretend to have ſeen what they never ſaw; aſſert facts which they had no knowledge of; bring upon themſelves, for nothing, enmity and hatred, danger and death?

PROPOSITION

# PROPOSITION II.

## CHAP. I.

Our first proposition was, "*that there is satisfactory evidence, that many, pretending to be original witnesses of the Christian Miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct.*"

Our second proposition, and which now remains to be treated of, is, "*that there is* NOT *satisfactory evidence, that persons pretending to be original witnesses of any other similar miracles, have acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts.*"

I ENTER upon this part of my argument, by declaring how far my belief in miraculous accounts goes. If the reformers in the time of Wychliff, or of Luther; or those of England, in the time of Henry the Eighth, or of Queen Mary; or the founders of our religious sects since, such as were Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley in our times, had undergone the life of toil and exertion, of danger and suffering, which we know that many of them did undergo, *for* a miraculous story; that is to say, if they had founded their public ministry upon the allegation of miracles wrought within their own knowledge, and upon narratives which could not be resolved into delusion or mistake; and if it had appeared, that their conduct really had its origin in these accounts, I should have believed them. Or, to borrow an instance which will be familiar to every one of my readers, if the late Mr. Howard had undertaken his labours and journies in attestation, and in

consequence

conſequence of a clear and ſenſible miracle, I ſhould have believed him alſo. Or to repreſent the ſame thing under a third ſuppoſition ; if Socrates had profeſſed to perform public miracles at Athens ; if the friends of Socrates, Phædo, Cebes, Crito, and Simmias, together with Plato, and many of his followers, relying upon the atteſtation which theſe miracles afforded to his pretenſions, had, at the hazard of their lives, and the certain expenſe of their eaſe and tranquillity, gone about Greece, after his death, to publiſh and propagate his doctrines ; and if theſe things had come to our knowledge, in the ſame way, as that in which the life of Socrates is now tranſmitted to us, through the hands of his companions and diſciples, that is, by writings received without doubt as theirs, from the age in which they were publiſhed to the preſent, I ſhould have believed this likewiſe. And my belief would, in each caſe, be much ſtrengthened, if the ſubject of the miſſion were of importance to the conduct and happineſs of human life ; if it teſtified any thing which it behoved mankind to know from ſuch authority ; if the nature of what it delivered, required the ſort of proof which it alleged ; if the occaſion was adequate to the interpoſition, the end worthy of the means. In the laſt caſe my faith would be much confirmed, if the effects of the tranſaction remained ; more eſpecially, if a change had been wrought, at the time, in the opinion and conduct of ſuch numbers, as to lay the foundation of an inſtitution, and of a ſyſtem of doctrines, which had ſince overſpread the greateſt part of the civilized world. I ſhould have believed, I ſay, the teſtimony, in theſe caſes ; yet none of them do more, than come up to the apoſtolic hiſtory.

If any one chooſe to call aſſent to this evidence, credulity, it is at leaſt incumbent upon him to produce examples, in which the ſame evidence hath turned out to be fallacious. And this contains the preciſe queſtion which we are now to agitate.

In ſtating the compariſon between our evidence, and what our adverſaries may bring into competition with ours, we

we will divide the diſtinctions which we wiſh to propoſe into two kinds, thoſe which relate to the proof, and thoſe which relate to the miracles. Under the former head we may lay out of the caſe ;

I. Such accounts of ſupernatural events, as are found only in hiſtories, by ſome ages poſterior to the tranſaction ; and of which it is evident, that the hiſtorian could know little more than his reader. Ours is contemporary hiſtory. This difference alone removes out of our way, the miraculous hiſtory of Pythagoras, who lived five hundred years before the Chriſtian era, written by Porphyrie and Jamblicus, who lived three hundred years after that era ; the prodigies of Livy's hiſtory ; the fables of the heroic ages ; the whole of the Greek and Roman, as well as of the Gothic mythology ; a great part of the legendary hiſtory of Popiſh ſaints, the very beſt atteſted of which, is extracted from the certificates that are exhibited during the proceſs of their canonization, a ceremony which ſeldom takes place till a century after their deaths. It applies alſo with conſiderable force to the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, which are contained in a ſolitary hiſtory of his life, publiſhed by Philoſtratus, above a hundred years after his death ; and, in which, whether Philoſtratus had any prior account to guide him, depends upon his ſingle unſupported aſſertion. Alſo to ſome of the miracles of the third century, eſpecially to one extraordinary inſtance, the account of Gregory, biſhop of Neoceſarea, called Thaumaturgus, delivered in the writings of Gregory of Nyſſen, who lived one hundred and thirty years after the ſubject of his panegyric.

The value of this circumſtance, is ſhown to have been accurately exemplified, in the hiſtory of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the order of Jeſuits.[a] His life, written by a companion of his, and by one of the order, was publiſhed about fifteen years after his death. In which life, the author, ſo far from aſcribing any miracles to Ignatius, induſtriouſly ſtates the reaſons, why he was not inveſted with

[a] Douglaſs's Criterion of Miracles, p. 74.

with any ſuch power. The life was re-publiſhed fifteen years afterwards, with the addition of many circumſtances, which were the fruit, the author ſays, of further inquiry, and of diligent examination ; but ſtill with a total ſilence about miracles. When Ignatius had been dead near ſixty years, the Jeſuits conceiving a wiſh to have the founder of their order placed in the Roman calendar, began, as it ſhould ſeem, for the firſt time, to attribute to him a catalogue of miracles, which could not then be diſtinctly diſproved ; and which, there was in thoſe who governed the church, a ſtrong diſpoſition to admit upon the ſlendereſt proofs.

II. We may lay out of the caſe, accounts publiſhed in one country, of what paſſed in a diſtant country, without any proof that ſuch accounts were known or received at home. In the caſe of Chriſtianity, Judea, which was the ſcene of the tranſaction, was the centre of the miſſion. The ſtory was publiſhed in the place in which it was acted. The church of Chriſt was firſt planted at Jeruſalem itſelf. With that church others correſponded. From thence the primitive teachers of the inſtitution went forth ; thither they aſſembled. The church of Jeruſalem, and the ſeveral churches of Judea, ſubſiſted from the beginning, and for many ages,[a] received alſo the ſame books, and the ſame accounts, as other churches did.

This diſtinction diſpoſes, amongſt others, of the above-mentioned miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, moſt of which are related to have been performed in India, no evidence remaining that either the miracles aſcribed to him, or the hiſtory of thoſe miracles, were ever heard of in India. Thoſe of Francis Xavier, the Indian miſſionary, with many others of the Romiſh breviary, are liable to the ſame objection, viz. that the accounts of them were publiſhed at a vaſt diſtance from the ſuppoſed ſcene of the wonders.[b]



[a] The ſucceſſion of many eminent biſhops of Jeruſalem, in the three firſt centuries, is diſtinctly preſerved, as Alexander, A. D. 212, who ſucceeded Narciſſus, then 116 years old.

[b] Doug. Crit. p. 84.

III. We lay out of the caſe *tranſient* rumours. Upon the firſt publication of an extraordinary account, or even of an article of ordinary intelligence, no one, who is not perſonally acquainted with the tranſaction, can know whether it be true or falſe, becauſe any man may publiſh any ſtory. It is in the future confirmation, or contradiction of the account; in its permanency, or its diſappearance; its dying away into ſilence, or its increaſing in notoriety; its being followed up by ſubſequent accounts, and being repeated in different and independent accounts, that ſolid truth is diſtinguiſhed from fugitive lies. This diſtinction is altogether on the ſide of Chriſtianity. The ſtory did not drop. On the contrary, it was ſucceeded by a train of action and events dependent upon it. The accounts, which we have in our hands, were compoſed after the firſt reports muſt have ſubſided. They were followed by a train of writings upon the ſubject. The hiſtorical teſtimonies of of the tranſaction were many and various, and connected with letters, diſcourſes, controverſies, apologies, ſucceſſively produced by the ſame tranſaction.

IV. We may lay out of the caſe what I call *naked* hiſtory. It has been ſaid, that if the prodigies of the Jewiſh hiſtory had been found only in fragments of Manetho, or Beroſus, we ſhould have paid no regard to them: and I am willing to admit this. If we knew nothing of the fact but from the fragment; if we poſſeſſed no proof that theſe accounts had been credited and acted upon, from times, probably, as ancient as the accounts themſelves; if we had no viſible effects connected with the hiſtory, no ſubſequent or collateral teſtimony to confirm it; under theſe circumſtances, I think that it would be undeſerving of credit. But this certainly is not our caſe. In appreciating the evidence of Chriſtianity, the books are to be combined with the inſtitution; with the prevalency of the religion at this day; with the time and place of its origin, which are acknowledged points; with the circumſtances of its riſe and progreſs, as collected from external hiſtory; with the fact of our preſent books being received by the votaries of the

inſtitution

inſtitution from the beginning; with that of other books coming after theſe, filled with accounts of the effects and conſequences reſulting from the tranſaction, or referring to the tranſaction, or built upon it; laſtly, with the conſideration of the number and variety of the books themſelves, the different writers from which they proceed, the different views with which they were written, ſo diſagreeing, as to repel the ſuſpicion of confederacy, ſo agreeing, as to ſhow that they were founded in a common original, i. e. in a ſtory ſubſtantially the ſame. Whether this proof be ſatisfactory or not, it is properly a cumulation of evidence, by no means a naked or ſolitary record.

V. A mark of hiſtorical truth, although only in a certain way, and to a certain degree, is *particularity* in names, dates, places, circumſtances, and in the order of events preceding or following the tranſaction: of which kind, for inſtance, is the particularity in the deſcription of St. Paul's voyage and ſhipwreck in the 27th chapter of the Acts, which no man, I think, can read without being convinced that the writer was there; and alſo in the account of the cure and examination of the blind man, in the ninth chapter of St. John's goſpel, which bears every mark of perſonal knowledge on the part of the hiſtorian.[a] I do not deny that fiction has often the particularity of truth; but then it is of ſtudied and elaborate fiction, or of a formal attempt to deceive, that we obſerve this. Since, however, experience proves that particularity is not confined to truth, I have ſtated that it is a proof of truth, only to a certain extent, i. e. it reduces the queſtion to this, whether we can depend or not upon the probity of the relator; which is a conſiderable advance in our preſent argument; for an expreſs attempt to deceive, in which caſe alone particularity can appear without truth, is charged upon the evangeliſts by few. If the hiſtorian acknowledge himſelf to have received his intelligence from others, the particularity of the narrative ſhows, *primâ facie*, the accuracy of his inquiries, and

[a] Both theſe chapters ought to be read for the ſake of this very obſervation.

and the fulneſs of his information. This remark belongs to St. Luke's hiſtory. Of the particularity which we allege, many examples may be found in all the goſpels. And it is very difficult to conceive, that ſuch numerous particularities, as are almoſt every where to be met with in the ſcriptures, ſhould be raiſed out of nothing, or be ſpun out of the imagination without any fact to go upon.[a]

It is to be remarked, however, that this particularity is only to be looked for in direct hiſtory. It is not natural in references or alluſions, which yet, in other reſpects, afford often, as far as they go, the moſt unſuſpicious evidence.

VI. We lay out of the caſe ſuch ſtories of ſupernatural events, as require, on the part of the hearer, nothing more than an *otioſe* aſſent; ſtories upon which nothing depends, in which no intereſt is involved, nothing is to be done or changed in conſequence of believing them. Such ſtories are credited, if the careleſs aſſent that is given to them deſerve that name, more by the indolence of the hearer than by his judgment; or, though not much credited, are paſſed from one to another without inquiry or reſiſtance. To this caſe, and to this caſe alone, belongs what is called the love of the marvellous. I have never known it carry men further. Men do not ſuffer perſecution from the love of the marvellous. Of the indifferent nature we are ſpeaking of, are moſt vulgar errors and popular ſuperſtitions: moſt, for inſtance, of the current reports of apparitions. Nothing depends upon their being

[a] "There is always ſome truth where there are conſiderable particularities related; and they always ſeem to bear ſome proportion to one another. Thus there is a great want of the particulars of time, place, and perſons, in Manetho's account of the Egyptian Dynaſties, Eteſias's of the Aſſyrian kings, and thoſe which the technical chronologers have given of the ancient kingdoms of Greece; and agreeably thereto, theſe accounts have much fiction and falſehood, with ſome truth: whereas Thucydides's hiſtory of the Peloponneſian war, and Cæſar's of the war in Gaul, in both which the particulars of time, place, and perſons are mentioned, are univerſally eſteemed true to a great degree of exactneſs." Hartley, vol. II. p. 109.

being true or falſe. But not, ſurely, of this kind were the alleged miracles of Chriſt and his apoſtles. They decided, if true, the moſt important queſtion, upon which the human mind can fix its anxiety. They claimed to regulate the opinions of mankind, upon ſubjects in which they are not only deeply concerned, but uſually refractory and obſtinate. Men could not be utterly careleſs in ſuch a caſe as this. If a Jew took up the ſtory, he found his darling partiality to his own nation and law wounded; if a Gentile, he found his idolatry and polytheiſm reprobated and condemned. Whoever entertained the account, whether Jew or Gentile, could not avoid the following reflection:—"If theſe things be true, I muſt give up the opinions and principles in which I have been brought up, the religion in which my fathers lived and died." It is not conceivable that a man ſhould do this upon any idle report or frivolous account, or, indeed, without being fully ſatisfied and convinced of the truth and credibility of the narrative to which he truſted. But it did not ſtop at opinions. They who believed Chriſtianity, acted upon it. Many made it the expreſs buſineſs of their lives to publiſh the intelligence. It was was required of thoſe, who admitted that intelligence, to change forthwith their conduct and their principles, to take up a different courſe of life, to part with their habits and gratifications, and begin a new ſet of rules and ſyſtem of behaviour. The apoſtles, at leaſt, were intereſted not to ſacrifice their eaſe, their fortunes, and their lives, for an idle tale; multitudes beſide them were induced, by the ſame tale, to encounter oppoſition, danger, and ſufferings.

If it be ſaid, that the mere promiſe of a future ſtate would do all this, I anſwer, that the mere promiſe of a future ſtate, without any evidence to give credit or aſſurance to it, would do nothing. A few wandering fiſhermen talking of a reſurrection of the dead could produce no effect. If it be further ſaid, that men eaſily believe, what they anxiouſly deſire, I again anſwer that, in my opinion, the very contrary of this is nearer to the truth. Anxiety of deſire,

earneſtneſs of expectation, the vaſtneſs of an event, rather cauſes men to diſbelieve, to doubt, to dread a fallacy, to diſtruſt and to examine. When our Lord's reſurrection was firſt reported to the apoſtles, they did not believe, we are told, for joy. This was natural, and is agreeable to experience.

VII. We have laid out of the caſe thoſe accounts, which require no more than a ſimple aſſent; and we now alſo lay out of the caſe thoſe which come merely *in affirmance* of opinions already formed. This laſt circumſtance it is of the utmoſt importance to notice well. It has long been obſerved, that Popiſh miracles happen in Popiſh countries; that they make no converts; which proves that ſtories are accepted, when they fall in with principles already fixed, with the public ſentiments, or with the ſentiments of a party already engaged on the ſide the miracle ſupports, which would not be attempted to be produced in the face of enemies, in oppoſition to reigning tenets or favourite prejudices, or when, if they be believed, the belief muſt draw men away from their pre-conceived and habitual opinions, from their modes of life and rules of action. In the former caſe, men may not only receive a miraculous account, but may both act and ſuffer on the ſide, and in the cauſe, which the miracle ſupports, yet not act or ſuffer *for* the miracle, but in purſuance of a prior perſuaſion. The miracle, like any other argument which only confirms what was before believed, is admitted with little examination. In the moral, as in the natural world, it is *change* which requires a cauſe. Men are eaſily fortified in their old opinions, driven from them with great difficulty. Now, how does this apply to the Chriſtian hiſtory? The miracles, there recorded, were wrought in the midſt of enemies, under a government, a prieſthood, and a magiſtracy, decidedly and vehemently adverſe to them, and to the pretenſions which they ſupported. They were Proteſtant miracles in a Popiſh country; they were Popiſh miracles in the midſt of Proteſtants. They produced a change; they eſtabliſhed a ſociety upon the ſpot adhering to the belief

lief of them ; they made converts, and thoſe who were converted, gave up to the teſtimony, their moſt fixed opinions, and moſt favourite prejudices. They who acted and ſuffered in the cauſe, acted and ſuffered *for* the miracles ; for there was no anterior perſuaſion to induce them, no prior reverence, prejudice, or partiality, to take hold of. Jeſus had not one follower when he ſet up his claim. His miracles gave birth to his ſect. No part of this deſcription belongs to the ordinary evidence of heathen or Popiſh miracles. Even moſt of the miracles alleged to have been performed by Chriſtians, in the ſecond and third century of its era, want this confirmation. It conſtitutes indeed a line of partition between the origin and the progreſs of Chriſtianity. Frauds and fallacies might mix themſelves with the progreſs, which could not poſſibly take place in the commencement of the religion ; at leaſt according to any laws of human conduct that we are acquainted with. What ſhould ſuggeſt to the firſt propagators of Chriſtianity, eſpecially to fiſhermen, tax-gatherers, and huſbandmen, ſuch a thought as that of changing the religion of the world ; what could bear them through the difficulties, in which the attempt engaged them ; what could procure any degree of ſucceſs to the attempt ; are queſtions which apply, with great force, to the ſetting out of the inſtitution, with leſs, to every future ſtage of it.

To hear ſome men talk, one would ſuppoſe the ſetting up of a religion by miracles to be a thing of every day's experience, whereas the whole current of hiſtory is againſt it. Hath any founder of a new ſect amongſt Chriſtians pretended to miraculous powers, and ſucceeded by his pretenſions ? " Were theſe powers claimed or exerciſed by the founders of the ſects of the Waldenſes and Albigenſes ? Did Wichliff in England pretend to it ? Did Huſs or Jerome in Bohemia ? Did Luther in Germany, Zuinglius in Switzerland, Calvin in France, or any of the reformers advance this plea ?"[a] The French prophets, in the beginning of the preſent century, ventured to allege miraculous

[a] Campbell on Miracles, p. 120. ed. 1766.

miraculous evidence, and immediately ruined their cauſe by their temerity. "Concerning the religion of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, of China, a ſingle miracle cannot be named, that was ever offered as a teſt of any of thoſe religions *before* their eſtabliſhment.[a]

We may add to what has been obſerved, of the diſtinction which we are conſidering, that, where miracles are alleged merely in affirmance of a prior opinion, they who believe the doctrine may ſometimes propagate a belief of the miracles which they do not themſelves entertain. This is the caſe of what are called *pious* frauds; but it is a caſe, I apprehend, which takes place, ſolely in ſupport of a perſuaſion already eſtabliſhed. At leaſt it does not hold of the apoſtolical hiſtory. If the apoſtles did not believe the miracles, they did not believe the religion; and, without this belief, where was the *piety*, what place was there for any thing, which could bear the name or colour of piety, in publiſhing and atteſting miracles in its behalf? If it be ſaid that many promote the belief of revelation, and of any accounts which favour that belief, becauſe they think them, whether well or ill founded, of public and political utility, I anſwer, that if a character exiſt, which can with leſs juſtice than another be aſcribed to the founders of the Chriſtian religion, it is that of politicians, or of men capable of entertaining political views. The truth is, that there is no aſſignable character, which will account for the conduct of the apoſtles, ſuppoſing their ſtory to be falſe. If bad men, what could induce them to take ſuch pains to promote virtue? If good men, they would not have gone about the country with a ſtring of lies in their mouths?

In appreciating the credit of any miraculous ſtory, theſe are diſtinctions which relate to the evidence. There are other diſtinctions, of great moment in the queſtion, which relate to the miracles themſelves. Of which latter kind the following ought carefully to be retained.

I. It is not neceſſary to admit as a miracle, what can be reſolved into a falſe perception. Of this nature was the

[a] Adams on Mir. p. 75.

the demon of Socrates; the viſions of St. Anthony, and of many others; the viſion which Lord Herbert of Cherbury deſcribes himſelf to have ſeen; Colonel Gardiner's viſion, as related in his life, written by Dr. Doddridge. All theſe may be accounted for by a momentary inſanity; for the characteriſtic ſymptom of human madneſs is the riſing up in the mind of images not diſtinguiſhable by the patient from impreſſions upon the ſenſes.[a] The caſes, however, in which the poſſibility of this deluſion exiſts, are divided from the caſes in which it does not exiſt, by many, and thoſe not obſcure marks. They are, for the moſt part, caſes of viſions or voices. The object is hardly ever touched. The viſion ſubmits not to be handled. One ſenſe does not confirm another. They are likewiſe almoſt always caſes of a *ſolitary* witneſs. It is in the higheſt degree improbable, and I know not, indeed, whether it hath ever been the fact, that the ſame derangement of the mental organs ſhould ſeize different perſons at the ſame time; a derangement, I mean, ſo much the ſame, as to repreſent to their imagination the ſame objects. Laſtly, theſe are always caſes of *momentary* miracles; by which term I mean to denote miracles, of which the whole exiſtence is of ſhort duration, in contradiſtinction to miracles which are attended with permanent effects. The appearance of a ſpectre, the hearing of a ſupernatural ſound, is a momentary miracle. The ſenſible proof is gone, when the apparition or ſound is over. But if a perſon born blind be reſtored to ſight, a notorious cripple to the uſe of his limbs, or a dead man to life, here is a permanent effect produced by ſupernatural means. The change indeed was inſtantaneous, but the proof continues. The ſubject of the miracle remains. The man cured or reſtored is there: his former condition was known, and his preſent condition may be examined. This can by no poſſibility be reſolved into falſe perception: and of this kind are by far the greater part of the miracles recorded in the New Teſtament.

When

[a] Batty on lunacy.

When Lazarus was raiſed from the dead, he did no merely move, and ſpeak, and die again; or come out o the grave and vaniſh away. He returned to his hom and his family, and there continued; for we find him ſometime afterwards, in the ſame town, ſitting at tabl with Jeſus and his ſiſters; viſited by great multitudes o the Jews, as a ſubject of curioſity; giving, by his pre ence, ſo much uneaſineſs to the Jewiſh rulers, as to bege in them a deſign of deſtroying him.[a] No deluſion ca account for this. The French prophets in England ſometime ſince, gave out that one of their teachers woul come to life again, but their enthuſiaſm never made them believe that they actually ſaw him alive. The blind man whoſe reſtoration to ſight at Jeruſalem is recorded in the ninth chapter of St. John's goſpel, did not quit the place or conceal himſelf from inquiry. On the contrary, he was forthcoming, to anſwer the call, to ſatisfy the ſcrutiny, and to ſuſtain the browbeating of Chriſt's angry and pow- erful enemies. When the cripple at the gate of the tem- ple was ſuddenly cured by Peter,[b] he did not immediately relapſe into his former lameneſs, or diſappear out of the city; but boldly and honeſtly produced himſelf along with the apoſtles, when they were brought the next day before the Jewiſh council.[c] Here, though the miracle was ſud- den, the proof was permanent. The lameneſs had been notorious, the cure continued. This, therefore, could not be the effect of any momentary delirium, either in the ſubject or in the witneſſes of the tranſaction. It is the ſame with the greateſt number of the ſcripture miracles. There are other caſes of a *mixed* nature, in which, although the principal miracle be momentary, ſome circumſtance combined with it is permanent. Of this kind is the hiſ- tory of St. Paul's converſion.[d] The ſudden light and ſound, the viſion and the voice, upon the road to Damaſ- cus, were momentary; but Paul's blindneſs for three days in conſequence of what had happened; the communica-

tion

[a] John xii. 1, 2, 9, 10. [b] Acts iii. 2.
[c] Acts iv. 14. [d] Acts ix.

tion made to Ananias in another place, and by a viſion independent of the former; Ananias finding out Paul in conſequence of intelligence ſo received, and finding him in the condition deſcribed, and Paul's recovery of his ſight upon Ananias laying his hands upon him; are circumſtances, which take the tranſaction, and the principal miracle as included in it, entirely out of the caſe of momentary miracles, or of ſuch as may be accounted for by falſe perceptions. Exactly the ſame thing may be obſerved of Peter's viſion preparatory to the call of Cornelius, and of its connexion with what was imparted in a diſtant place to Cornelius himſelf, and with the meſſage diſpatched by Cornelius to Peter. The viſion might be a dream, the meſſage could not. Either communication, taken ſeparately, might be a deluſion; the concurrence of the two was impoſſible to happen without a ſupernatural cauſe.

Beſide the riſk of deluſion, which attaches upon momentary miracles, there is alſo much more room for impoſture. The account cannot be examined at the moment. And, when that is alſo a moment of hurry and confuſion, it may not be difficult for men of influence to gain credit to any ſtory, which they may wiſh to have believed. This is preciſely the caſe of one of the beſt atteſted of the miracles of old Rome, the appearance of Caſtor and Pollux in the battle fought by Poſthumius with the Latins at the lake Regillus. There is no doubt but that Poſthumius, after the battle, ſpread the report of ſuch an appearance. No perſon could deny it, whilſt it was ſaid to laſt. No perſon, perhaps, had any inclination to diſpute it afterwards; or, if they had, could ſay with poſitiveneſs, what was, or what was not ſeen, by ſome or other of the army, in the diſmay, and amidſt the tumult of a battle.

In aſſigning falſe perceptions, as the origin to which ſome miraculous accounts may be referred, I have not mentioned claims to inſpiration, illuminations, ſecret notices or directions, internal ſenſations, or conſciouſneſſes of being acted upon by ſpiritual influences, good or bad, becauſe,

cauſe, theſe appealing to no external proof, however convincing they may be to the perſons themſelves, form no part of what can be accounted miraculous evidence. Their own credibility ſtands upon their alliance with other miracles. The diſcuſſion, therefore, of all ſuch pretenſions may be omitted.

II. It is not neceſſary to bring into the compariſon what may be called *tentative* miracles; that is, where, out of a great number of trials, ſome ſucceed, and in the accounts of which, although the narrative of the ſucceſsful caſes be alone preſerved, and that of the unſucceſsful caſes ſunk, yet enough is ſtated to ſhow that the caſes produced are only a few out of many in which the ſame means have been employed. This obſervation bears, with conſiderable force, upon the ancient oracles and auguries, in which a ſingle coincidence of the event with the prediction is talked of and magnified, whilſt failures are forgotten, or ſuppreſſed, or accounted for. It is alſo applicable to the cures wrought by relics, and at the tombs of ſaints. The boaſted efficacy of the king's touch, upon which Mr. Hume lays ſome ſtreſs, falls under the ſame deſcription. Nothing is alleged concerning it, which is not alleged of various noſtrums, namely, out of many thouſands who have uſed them, certified proofs of a few who have recovered after them. No ſolution of this ſort is applicable to the miracles of the goſpel. There is nothing in the narrative which can induce, or even allow us to believe, that Chriſt attempted cures in many inſtances, and ſucceeded in a few; or that he ever made the attempt in vain. He did not profeſs to heal every where all that were ſick; on the contrary, he told the Jews, evidently meaning to repreſent his own caſe, that "although many widows were in Iſrael in the days of Elias, when the heaven was ſhut up three years and ſix months, when great famine was throughout all the land, yet unto none of them was Elias ſent, ſave unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow:" and that "many lepers were in Iſrael in the time of Eliſeus the prophet, and none of them was

cleanſed

cleanſed ſaving Naaman the Syrian."[a] By which examples he gave them to underſtand, that it was not the nature of a divine interpoſition, or neceſſary to its purpoſe, to be general; ſtill leſs, to anſwer every challenge that might be made, which would teach men to put their faith upon theſe experiments. Chriſt never pronounced the word, but the effect followed.[b] It was not a thouſand ſick that received his benediction, and a few that were benefited: a ſingle paralytic is let down in his bed at Jeſus's feet, in the midſt of a ſurrounding multitude; Jeſus bid him walk, and he did ſo.[c] A man with a withered hand is in the ſynagogue; Jeſus bid him ſtretch forth his hand, in the preſence of the aſſembly, and it was "reſtored whole like the other."[d] There was nothing tentative in theſe cures; nothing that can be explained by the power of accident.

We may obſerve alſo, that many of the cures which Chriſt wrought, ſuch as that of a perſon blind from his birth, alſo many miracles beſide cures as raiſing the dead, walking upon the ſea, feeding a great multitude with a few loaves and fiſhes, are of a nature which does not in anywiſe admit of the ſuppoſition of a fortunate experiment.

III. We may diſmiſs from the queſtion all accounts in which, allowing the phænomenon to be real, the fact to be true, it ſtill remains doubtful whether a miracle were wrought. This is the caſe with the ancient hiſtory of what is called the

[a] Luke iv. 25.

[b] One, and only one, inſtance may be produced in which the *diſciples* of Chriſt do ſeem to have attempted a cure, and not to have been able to perform it. The ſtory is very ingenuouſly and candidly related by three of the evangeliſts.* The patient was afterwards healed by Chriſt himſelf; and the whole tranſaction ſeems to have been intended, as it was well ſuited, to diſplay the ſuperiority of Chriſt above all who performed miracles in his name; a diſtinction which, during his preſence in the world, it might be neceſſary to inculcate by ſome ſuch proof as this.

[c] Mark ii. 3. [d] Mat. xii. 10.

* *Mark ix.* 14. *Mat. xiv.* 20.

the thundering legion, of the extraordinary circumſtances which obſtructed the rebuilding of the temple at Jeruſalem by Julian, the circling of the flames and fragrant ſmell at the martyrdom of Polycarp, the ſudden ſhower that extinguiſhed the fire into which the ſcriptures were thrown in the Diocletian perſecution; Conſtantine's dream, his inſcribing in conſequence of it the croſs upon his ſtandard and the ſhields of his ſoldiers; his victory, and the eſcape of the ſtandard bearer; perhaps alſo the imagined appearance of the croſs in the heavens, though this laſt circumſtance is very deficient in hiſtorical evidence. It is alſo the caſe with the modern annual exhibition of liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius at Naples. It is a doubt likewiſe, which ought to be excluded by very ſpecial circumſtances, from theſe narratives which relate to the ſupernatural cure of hypochondriacal and nervous complaints, and of all diſeaſes which are much affected by the imagination. The miracles of the ſecond and third century are, uſually, healing the ſick, and caſting out evil ſpirits, miracles in which there is room for ſome error and deception. We hear nothing of cauſing the blind to ſee, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the lepers to be cleanſed.[a] There are alſo inſtances in Chriſtian writers of reputed miracles, which were natural operations, though not known to be ſuch at the time, as that of articulate ſpeech after the loſs of a great part of the tongue.

IV. To the ſame head of objection nearly, may alſo be referred accounts, in which the variation of a ſmall circumſtance may have transformed ſome extraordinary appearance, or ſome critical coincidence of events, into a miracle; ſtories, in a word, which may be reſolved into exaggeration. The miracles of the goſpel can by no poſſibility be explained away in this manner. Total fiction will account for any thing; but no ſtretch of exaggeration that has any parallel in other hiſtories, no force of fancy upon real circumſtances, could produce the narratives which we now have. The feeding of the five thouſand with

[a] Jortin's Rem. vol. II. p. 51.

with a few loaves and fiſhes ſurpaſſes all bounds of exaggeration. The raiſing of Lazarus, of the widow's ſon at Nain, as well as many of the cures which Chriſt wrought, come not within the compaſs of miſrepreſentation. I mean, that it is impoſſible to aſſign any poſition of circumſtances, however peculiar, any accidental effects, however extraordinary, any natural ſingularity, which could ſupply an origin or foundation to theſe accounts.

Having thus enumerated ſeveral exceptions, which may juſtly be taken to relations of miracles, it is neceſſary, when we read the ſcriptures, to bear in our mind this general remark, that although there be miracles recorded in the New Teſtament, which fall within ſome or other of the exceptions here aſſigned, yet that they are united with others, to which none of the ſame exceptions extend, and that their credibility ſtands upon this union. Thus the viſions and revelations, which St. Paul aſſerts to have been imparted to him, may not, in their ſeparate evidence, be diſtinguiſhable from the viſions and revelations which many others have alleged. But here is the difference. St. Paul's pretenſions were atteſted by external miracles wrought by himſelf, and by miracles wrought in the cauſe to which theſe viſions relate; or, to ſpeak more properly, the ſame hiſtorical authority which informs us of one, informs us of the other. This is not ordinarily true of the viſions of enthuſiaſts, or even of the accounts in which they are contained. Again, ſome of Chriſt's own miracles were *momentary*; as the transfiguration, the appearance and voice from heaven at Chriſt's baptiſm, a voice from the clouds upon one occaſion afterwards, (John xii. 30) and ſome others. It is not denied, that the diſtinction which we have propoſed concerning miracles of this ſpecies, applies in diminution of the force of the evidence, as much to theſe inſtances, as to others. But this is the caſe, not with all the miracles aſcribed to Chriſt, nor with the greateſt part, nor with many. Whatever force therefore there may be in the objection, we have numerous miracles which are free from it; and even theſe to which it

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is applicable, are little affected by it in their credit, becauſe there are few, who, admitting the reſt, will reject *them*. If there be miracles of the New Teſtament, which come within any of the *other* heads into which we have diſtributed the objections, the ſame remark muſt be repeated. And this is one way, in which the unexampled number and variety of the miracles aſcribed to Chriſt, ſtrengthens the credibility of Chriſtianity. For it precludes any ſolution, or conjecture about a ſolution, which imagination, or even which experience might ſuggeſt concerning ſome particular miracles, if conſidered independently of others. The miracles of Chriſt were of various kinds,[a] and performed in great varieties of ſituation, form and manner; at Jeruſalem, the metropolis of the Jewiſh nation and religion, in different parts of Judea and Galilee; in cities, in villages; in ſynagogues, in private houſes; in the ſtreet, in highways; with preparation, as in the caſe of Lazarus, by accident, as in the caſe of the widow's ſon at Nain; when attended by multitudes, and when alone with the patient; in the midſt of his diſciples, and in the preſence of his enemies; with the common people around him, and before Scribes and Phariſees, and rulers of the ſynagogues.

I apprehend that, when we remove from the compariſon the caſes which are fairly diſpoſed of by the obſervations that have been ſtated, many caſes will not remain. To thoſe which do remain, we apply this final diſtinction; "that there is not ſatisfactory evidence, that perſons pretending to be original witneſſes of the miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers and ſufferings, voluntarily undertaken and undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which

[a] Not only healing every ſpecies of diſeaſe, but turning water into wine (John ii;) feeding multitudes with a few loaves and fiſhes (Mat. xiv. 14. Mark vi. 35. Luke ix. 12. John iv. 5;) walking on the ſea (Mat. xiv. 23;) calming a ſtorm (Mat. viii. 26. Luke viii. 23;) a celeſtial voice at his baptiſm, and miraculous appearance (Mat. iii. 17. afterwards John xii. 28;) his tranſfiguration (Mat. xvii. 1—8. Mark ix. 2. Luke ix. 28. Ep. Peter i. 16, 17;) raiſing the dead in three diſtinct inſtances (Mat. ix. 18. Mark v. 22. Luke viii. 41. Luke vii. 14. John xi.)

which they delivered, and properly in conſequence of their belief of the truth of thoſe accounts."

## CHAP. II.

BUT they, with whom we argue, have undoubtedly a right to elect their own examples. The inſtances, with which Mr. Hume hath choſen to confront the miracles of the New Teſtament, and which, therefore, we are entitled to regard, as the ſtrongeſt which the hiſtory of the world could ſupply to the inquiries of a very acute and learned adverſary, are the three following;

1. The cure of a blind and of a lame man at Alexandria, by the emperor Veſpaſian, as related by Tacitus;

2. The reſtoration of the limb of an attendant in a Spaniſh church, as told by Cardinal de Retz; and

3. The cures ſaid to be performed at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, in the early part of the preſent century.

1. The narrative of Tacitus is delivered in theſe terms: "One of the common people of Alexandria, known to be diſeaſed in his eyes, by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that ſuperſtitious nation worſhip above all other gods, proſtrated himſelf before the emperor, earneſtly imploring from him a remedy for his blindneſs, and entreating, that he would deign to anoint with his ſpittle his cheeks and the balls of his eyes. Another, diſeaſed in his hand, requeſted, by the admonition of the ſame god, that he might be touched by the foot of the emperor. Veſpaſian at firſt derided and deſpiſed their application; afterwards, when they continued to urge their petitions, he, ſometimes, appeared to dread the imputation of vanity; at other times, by the earneſt ſupplication of the patients, and the perſuaſion of his flatterers, to be induced to hope for ſucceſs. At length he commanded an inquiry to be made by phyſicians, whether ſuch a blindneſs and debility were vincible by human aid. The report of the phyſicians contained

various points; that in the one, the power of viſion was not deſtroyed, but would return, if the obſtacles were removed; that, in the other, the diſeaſed joints might be reſtored, if a healing power were applied; that it was, perhaps, agreeable to the gods to do this; that the emperor was elected by divine aſſiſtance; laſtly, that the credit of the ſucceſs would be the emperor's, the ridicule of the diſappointment would fall upon the patients. Veſpaſian, believing that every thing was in the power of his fortune, and that nothing was any longer incredible, whilſt the multitude, which ſtood by, eagerly expected the event, with a countenance expreſſive of joy executed what he was deſired to do. Immediately the hand was reſtored to its uſe, and light returned to the blind man. They who were preſent, relate both theſe cures, even at this time, when there is nothing to be gained by lying."[a]

Now, although Tacitus wrote this account twenty-ſeven years after the miracle is ſaid to have been performed, and wrote at Rome of what paſſed at Alexandria, and wrote alſo from report; and although it does not appear that he had examined the ſtory, or that he believed it, (but rather the contrary) yet I think his teſtimony ſufficient to prove, that ſuch a tranſaction took place; by which I mean, that the two men in queſtion did apply to Veſpaſian, that Veſpaſian did touch the diſeaſed in the manner related, and that a cure was reported to have followed the operation. But the affair labours under a ſtrong and juſt ſuſpicion, that the whole of it was a concerted impoſture brought about by concluſion, between the patients, the phyſician, and the emperor. This ſolution is probable, becauſe there was every thing to ſuggeſt, and every thing to facilitate ſuch a ſcheme. The miracle was calculated to confer honour upon the emperor, and upon the god Serapis. It was achieved in the midſt of the emperor's flatterers and followers; in a city, and amongſt a populace, beforehand devoted to his intereſt, and to the worſhip of the god; where it would have been treaſon and blaſphemy together, to have contradicted the fame of the cure, or even to have queſtioned

[a] Tac. Ant. p. 98.

ed it. And what is very obſervable in the account is, that the report of the phyſicians is juſt ſuch a report, as would have been made of a caſe, in which no external marks of the diſeaſe exiſted, and which, conſequently, was capable of being eaſily counterfeited, viz. that, in the firſt of the patients, the organs of viſion were not deſtroyed, that the weakneſs of the ſecond was in his joints. The ſtrongeſt circumſtance in Tacitus's narration is, that the firſt patient was "*notus* tabe oculorum," remarked or notorious for the diſeaſe in his eyes. But this was a circumſtance which might have found its way into the ſtory in its progreſs from a diſtant country, and during an interval of thirty years; or it might be true that the malady of the eyes was notorious, yet that the nature and degree of the diſeaſe had never been aſcertained. A caſe by no means uncommon. The emperor's reſerve was eaſily affected, or it is poſſible he might not be in the ſecret. There does not ſeem to be much weight in the obſervation of Tacitus, that they who were preſent continued even then to relate the ſtory, when there was nothing to be gained by the lie. It only proves that thoſe, who had told the ſtory for many years, perſiſted in it. The ſtate of mind of the witneſſes and ſpectators *at the time*, is the point to be attended to. Still leſs is there of pertinency in Mr. Hume's eulogium upon the cautious and penetrating genius of the hiſtorian; for it does not appear that the hiſtorian believed it. The terms in which he ſpeaks of Serapis, the deity to whoſe interpoſition the miracle was attributed, ſcarcely ſuffer us to ſuppoſe that Tacitus thought the miracle to be real, "by the admonition of the god Serapis, whom that ſuperſtitious nation (dedita ſuperſtitionibus gens) worſhip above all other gods." To have brought this ſuppoſed miracle within the limits of compariſon with the miracles of Chriſt, it ought to have appeared, that a perſon of a low and private ſtation, in the midſt of enemies, with the whole power of the country oppoſing him, with every one around him prejudiced or intereſted againſt his claims and character, pretended to perform theſe cures; and required the ſpectators, upon the ſtrength of what they ſaw, to give up their firmeſt hopes and opinions,

ions, and follow *him* through a life of trial and danger; that many were ſo moved, as to obey his call, at the expenſe both of every notion in which they had been brought up, and of their eaſe, ſafety and reputation; and that by theſe beginnings a change was produced in the world, the effects of which remain to this day: a caſe, both in its circumſtances and conſequences, very unlike any thing we find in Tacitus's relation.

2. The ſtory taken from the memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, which is the ſecond example alleged by Mr. Hume, is this: "In the church at Saragoſſa in Spain, the canons ſhewed me a man whoſe buſineſs it was to light the lamps, telling me that he had been ſeveral years at the gate, with one leg only. I ſaw him with two."[a]

It is ſtated by Mr. Hume, that the Cardinal who relates this ſtory, did not believe it; and it no where appears, that he either examined the limb, or aſked the patient, or indeed any one, a ſingle queſtion about the matter. An artificial leg wrought with art, would be ſufficient, in a place where no ſuch contrivance had ever before been heard of, to give origin and currency to the report. The eccleſiaſtics of the place would, it is probable, favour the ſtory, inaſmuch as it advanced the honour of their image and church. And if *they* patronized it, no other perſon at Saragoſſa, in the middle of the laſt century, would care to diſpute it. The ſtory likewiſe coincided, not leſs with the wiſhes and preconceptions of the people, than with the intereſts of their eccleſiaſtical rulers; ſo that there was prejudice backed by authority, and both operating upon extreme ignorance, to account for the ſucceſs of the impoſture. If, as I have ſuggeſted, the contrivance of an artificial limb was then new, it would not occur to the Cardinal himſelf to ſuſpect it; eſpecially under the careleſsneſs of mind with which he heard the tale, and the little inclination he felt to ſcrutinize or expoſe its fallacy.

3. The miracles related to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, admit in general of this ſolution. The patients who frequented the tomb, were ſo affected by

[a] Liv. 4. A. D. 1654.

by their devotion, their expectation, the place, the ſolemnity, and, above all, by the ſympathy of the ſurrounding multitude, that many of them were thrown into violent convulſions, which convulſions, in certain inſtances, produced a removal of diſorders depending upon obſtruction. We ſhall, at this day, have the leſs difficulty in admitting the above account, becauſe it is the very ſame thing, as hath lately been experienced in the operations of animal magnetiſm; and the report of the French phyſicians upon that myſterious remedy, is very applicable to the preſent conſideration, viz. that the pretenders to the art, by working upon the imaginations of their patients, were frequently able to produce convulſions; that convulſions ſo produced are amongſt the moſt powerful, but, at the ſame time, moſt uncertain and unmanageable applications to the human frame, which can be employed.

Circumſtances, which indicate this explication in the caſe of the Pariſian miracles, are the following:

1. They were *tentative*. Out of many thouſand ſick, infirm, and diſeaſed perſons, who reſorted to the tomb, the profeſſed hiſtory of the miracles contains only nine cures.

2. The convulſions at the tomb are admitted.

3. The diſeaſes were, for the moſt part, of that ſort, which depends upon inaction and obſtruction, as dropſies, palſies, and ſome tumours.

4. The cures were gradual; ſome patients attending many days, ſome, ſeveral weeks, and ſome, ſeveral months.

5. The cures were many of them incomplete.

6. Others were temporary.[a]

So that all the wonder we are called upon to account for is, that, out of an almoſt innumerable multitude which reſorted to the tomb for the cure of their complaints, and many of whom were there agitated by ſtrong convulſions, a very ſmall proportion experienced a beneficial change in their conſtitution, eſpecially in the action of the nerves and glands.

Some

[a] The reader will find theſe particulars verified in the detail, by the accurate inquiries of the preſent Biſhop of Sarum in his criterion of miracles, p. 134. et ſeq.

Some of the caſes alleged do not require that we ſhoul have recourſe to this ſolution. The firſt caſe in the cata logue is ſcarcely diſtinguiſhable from the progreſs of a nat ural recovery. It was that of a young man, who laboured under an inflammation of one eye, and had loſt the ſight o the other. The inflamed eye was relieved, but the blind neſs of the other remained. The inflammation had before been abated by medicine; and the young man, at the time of his attendance at the tomb, was uſing a lotion of lauda num. And, what is a ſtill more material part of the caſe, the inflammation after ſome interval returned. Another caſe was that of a young man who had loſt his ſight by the puncture of an awl, and the diſcharge of the aqueous humour through the wound. The ſight, which had been gradually returning, was much improved during his viſit to the tomb, that is, probably in the ſame degree in which the diſcharged humour was replaced by freſh ſecretions. And it is obſervable, that theſe two are the only caſes, which, from their nature, ſhould ſeem unlikely to be affect ed by convulſions.

In one material reſpect I allow, that the Pariſian mira cles were different from thoſe related by Tacitus, and from the Spaniſh miracle of the Cardinal de Retz. They had not, like them, all the power and all the prejudice of the country on their ſide to begin with. They were al leged by one party againſt another, by the Janſeniſts againſt the Jeſuits. Theſe were of courſe oppoſed and ex amined by their adverſaries. The conſequence of which examination was, that many falſehoods were detected, that, with ſomething really extraordinary, much fraud appeared to be mixed. And if ſome of the caſes, upon which de ſigned miſrepreſentation could not be charged, were not at the time ſatisfactorily accounted for, it was becauſe the ef ficacy of ſtrong ſpaſmodic affections were not then ſuffi ciently known. Finally, the cauſe of Janſeniſm did not riſe by the miracles, but ſank, although the miracles had the anterior perſuaſion of all the numerous adherents of that cauſe to ſet out with.

Theſe,

Theſe, let us remember, are the ſtrongeſt examples which the hiſtory of ages ſupplies. In none of them was the miracle *unequivocal*; by none of them were eſtabliſhed prejudices and perſuaſions overthrown; of none of them did the credit make its way, in oppoſition to authority and power; by none of them were many induced to commit themſelves, and that in contradiction to prior opinions, to a life of mortification, danger, and ſufferings: none were called upon to atteſt them, at the expenſe of their fortunes and ſafety.[a]

PART

[a] It may be thought that the hiſtorian of the Pariſian miracles, M. Montgeron, forms an exception to this laſt aſſertion. He preſented his book (with a ſuſpicion, as it ſhould ſeem, of the danger of what he was doing) to the king; and was ſhortly afterwards committed to priſon, from which he never came out. Had the miracles been unequivocal, and had M. Montgeron been originally convinced by them, I ſhould have allowed this exception. It would have ſtood, I think, alone in the argument of our adverſaries. But, beſide what has been obſerved of the dubious nature of the miracles, the account, which M. Montgeron has himſelf left of his converſion, ſhows both the ſtate of his mind, and *that his perſuaſion was not built upon external miracles*. "Scarcely had he entered the church-yard, when he was ſtruck," he tells us, "with awe and reverence, having never before heard prayers pronounced with ſo much ardour and tranſport, as he obſerved amongſt the ſupplicants at the tomb. Upon this, throwing himſelf on his knees, reſting his elbows on the tombſtone, and covering his face with his hands, he ſpake the following prayer, *O thou, by whoſe interceſſion ſo many miracles are ſaid to be performed, if it be true that a part of thee ſurviveth the grave, and that thou haſt influence with the Almighty, have pity on the darkneſs of my underſtanding, and through his mercy obtain the removal of it.* Having prayed thus, many thoughts, as he ſayeth, began to open themſelves to his mind; and ſo profound was his attention, that he continued on his knees four hours, not in the leaſt diſturbed by the vaſt crowd of ſurrounding ſupplicants. During this time all the arguments which he ever heard or read in favour of Chriſtianity, occurred to him with ſo much force, and ſeemed ſo ſtrong and convincing, that he went home fully ſatisfied of the truth of religion in general, and of the holineſs and power of that perſon, who," as he ſuppoſed, "had engaged the divine goodneſs to enlighten his underſtanding ſo ſuddenly." Douglaſs Crit. of Mir. p. 214.

# PART THE SECOND.

## Of the Auxiliary Evidences of Christianity.

### CHAP. I.

*Prophecy.*

*Iſ.* lii. 13. liii. "BEHOLD, my ſervant ſhall deal prudently, he ſhall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high. As many were aſtoniſhed at thee; his viſage was ſo marred more than any man, and his form more than the ſons of men: ſo ſhall he ſprinkle many nations; the kings ſhall ſhut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them ſhall they ſee; and that which they had not heard ſhall they conſider. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he ſhall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire him. He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was deſpiſed, and we eſteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our ſorrows: yet we did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities: the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him; and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppreſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth. He

was taken from priſon and from judgment: and who ſhall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; becauſe he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him; he hath put him to grief. When thou ſhalt make his ſoul an offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed, he ſhall prolong his days, and the pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper in his hand. He ſhall ſee of the travail of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatisfied: by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many; for he ſhall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he ſhall divide the ſpoil with the ſtrong; becauſe he hath poured out his ſoul unto death: and he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors; and he bare the ſin of many, and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors."

THESE words are extant in a book, purporting to contain the predictions of a writer, who lived ſeven centuries before the Chriſtian era.

That material part of every argument from prophecy, namely, that the words alleged were actually ſpoken or written before the fact, to which they are applied, took place, or could by any natural means be foreſeen, is, in the preſent inſtance, inconteſtible. The record comes out of the cuſtody of adverſaries. The Jews, as an ancient father well obſerved, are our librarians. The paſſage is in their copies as well as in ours. With many attempts to explain it away, none has ever been made by them to diſcredit its authenticity.

And, what adds to the force of the quotation is, that it is taken from a writing *declaredly prophetic;* a writing, profeſſing to deſcribe ſuch future tranſactions and changes in the world, as were connected with the fate and intereſts of the Jewiſh nation. It is not a paſſage in an hiſtorical or devotional compoſition, which, becauſe it turns out to be applicable to ſome future events, or to ſome future ſituation of affairs, is preſumed to have been oracular. The

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words of Iſaiah were delivered by him in a prophetic character, with the ſolemnity belonging to that character; and what he ſo delivered, was all along underſtood by the Jewiſh reader to refer to ſomething that was to take place after the time of the author. The public ſentiments of the Jews, concerning the deſign of Iſaiah's writings, are ſet forth in the book of Eccleſiaſticus: "He ſaw, by an excellent ſpirit, what ſhould come to paſs at the laſt, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion. He ſhowed what ſhould come to paſs forever, and ſecret things or ever they came." (ch. xlviii. v. 24)

It is alſo an advantage which this prophecy poſſeſſes, that it is intermixed with no other ſubject. It is entire, ſeparate, and uninterruptedly directed to one ſcene of things.

The application of the prophecy to the evangelic hiſtory is plain and appropriate. Here is no double ſenſe. No figurative language but what is ſufficiently intelligible to every reader of every country. The obſcurities, by which I mean the expreſſions that require a knowledge of local diction, and of local alluſion, are few, and not of great importance. Nor have I found that varieties of reading, or a different conſtruing of the original, produce any material alteration in the ſenſe of the prophecy. Compare the common tranſlation with that of biſhop Lowth, and the difference is not conſiderable. So far as they do differ, biſhop Lowth's corrections, which are the faithful reſult of an accurate examination, bring the deſcription nearer to the New Teſtament hiſtory than it was before. In the fourth verſe of the fifty-third chapter, what our bible renders "ſtricken," he tranſlates "judicially ſtricken:" and in the eighth verſe, the clauſe "he was taken from priſon and from judgment," the biſhop gives "by an oppreſſive judgment he was taken off." The next words to theſe, "who ſhall declare his generation," are much cleared up in their meaning by the biſhop's verſion, "his manner of life who would declare," i. e. who would ſtand forth in his defence. The former part of the ninth verſe, "and he made his grave with the wicked, and with

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the rich in his death," which inverts the circumſtances of Chriſt's paſſion, the biſhop brings out in an order perfectly agreeable to the event; "and his grave was appointed with the wicked, but with the rich man was his tomb." The words in the eleventh verſe, "by his knowledge ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many," are in the biſhop's verſion "by the *knowledge of him* ſhall my righteous ſervant juſtify many."

It is natural to inquire what turn the Jews themſelves give to this prophecy.[a] There is good proof that the ancient Rabbins explained it of their expected Meſſiah;[b] but their modern expoſitors concur, I think, in repreſenting it, as a deſcription of the calamitous ſtate and intended reſtoration of the Jewiſh people, who are here, as they ſay, exhibited under the character of a ſingle perſon. I have not diſcovered that their expoſition reſts upon any critical arguments, or upon theſe in any other than a very minute degree. The clauſe in the ninth verſe, which we render "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſtricken," and in the margin "was the ſtroke upon him," the Jews read, "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was the ſtroke upon *them*." And what they allege in ſupport of the alteration amounts only to this, that the Hebrew pronoun is capable of a plural, as well as of a ſingular ſignification, that is to ſay, is capable of their conſtruction as well as ours.[c] And this is

[a] "Vaticinium hoc Eſaiæ eſt carnificina Rabbinorum, de quo aliqui Judæi mihi confeſſi ſunt, Rabbinos ſuos ex propheticis ſcripturis facile ſe extricare potuiſſe, *modo Eſaias tacuiſſet*." Hulſe Theol. Jud. p. 318. quoted by Poole in loc.

[b] Hulſe Theol. Jud. p. 430.

[c] Biſhop Lowth adopts in this place the reading of the ſeventy, which gives ſmitten *to death*, "for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſmitten to death." The addition of the words "to death," makes an end of the Jewiſh interpretation of the clauſe. And the authority, upon which this reading (though not given by the preſent Hebrew text) is adopted, Dr. Kennicot has ſet forth by an argument, not only ſo cogent, but ſo clear and popular, that I beg leave to tranſcribe the ſubſtance of it into this note. "Origen, after having quoted at large this prophecy concerning the Meſſiah,

is all the variation contended for: the reſt of the prophecy they read as we do. The probability, therefore, of their expoſition is a ſubject of which we are as capable of judging as themſelves. This judgment is open indeed to the good ſenſe of every attentive reader. The application which the Jews contend for, appears to me to labour under inſuperable difficulties; in particular, it may be demanded of them to explain, in *whoſe* name or perſon, if the Jewiſh people be the ſufferer, does the prophet ſpeak, when he ſays, "he hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* ſorrows, yet *we* did eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of God and afflicted; but he was wounded for *our* tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for *our* iniquities, the chaſtiſement of *our* peace

Meſſiah, tells us, that having once made uſe of this paſſage, in a diſpute againſt ſome that were accounted wiſe among the Jews, one of them replied, that the words did not mean one man, but one people, the Jews, who were ſmitten of God, and diſperſed among the Gentiles for their converſion; that he then urged many parts of this prophecy, to ſhew the abſurdity of this interpretation, and that he ſeemed to preſs them the hardeſt by this ſentence—"for the tranſgreſſion of my people was he ſmitten to death." Now, as Origen, the author of the Hexapla, muſt have underſtood Hebrew, we cannot ſuppoſe that he would have urged this laſt text as ſo deciſive, if the Greek verſion had not agreed here with the Hebrew text; nor that theſe wiſe Jews would have been at all diſtreſſed by this quotation, unleſs the Hebrew text had read agreeably to the words "to death," on which the argument principally depended; for by quoting it immediately, they would have triumphed over him, and reprobated his Greek verſion. This, whenever they could do it, was their conſtant practice in their diſputes with the Chriſtians. Origen himſelf, who laborioufly compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint, has recorded the neceſſity of arguing with the Jews, from ſuch paſſages only, as were in the Septuagint agreeable to the Hebrew. Wherefore, as Origen had carefully compared the Greek verſion of the Septuagint with the Hebrew text; and as he puzzled and confounded the learned Jews, by urging upon them the reading "to death" in this place; it ſeems almoſt impoſſible not to conclude, both from Origen's argument, and the ſilence of his Jewiſh adverſaries, that the Hebrew text at that time actually had the word agreeably to the verſion of the ſeventy." Lowth's Iſaiah, p. 242.

peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes *we* are healed." Again, the deſcription in the ſeventh verſe, "he was oppreſſed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the ſlaughter, and as a ſheep before her ſhearers is dumb, ſo he openeth not his mouth," quadrates with no part of the Jewiſh hiſtory with which we are acquainted. The mention of the "grave," and the "tomb," in the ninth verſe, is not very applicable to the fortunes of a nation; and ſtill leſs ſo is the concluſion of the prophecy in the twelfth verſe, which expreſsly repreſents the ſufferings as *voluntary*, and the ſufferer as interceding for the offenders, "becauſe he hath poured out his ſoul unto death, and he was numbered with the tranſgreſſors, and he bare the ſin of many, and made interceſſion for the tranſgreſſors."

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There are other prophecies of the Old Teſtament, interpreted by Chriſtians to relate to the goſpel hiſtory, which are deſerving both of great regard, and of a very attentive conſideration; but I content myſelf with ſtating the above, becauſe I think it the cleareſt and the ſtrongeſt of all, and becauſe moſt of the reſt, in order that their value be repreſented with any tolerable degree of fidelity, require a diſcuſſion unſuitable to the limits and nature of this work. The reader will find them diſpoſed in order, and diſtinctly explained in biſhop Chandler's treatiſe upon the ſubject: and he will bear in mind, what has been often, and, I think, truly urged by the advocates of Chriſtianity, that there is no other eminent perſon, to the hiſtory of whoſe life ſo many circumſtances can be made to apply. They who object, that much has been done by the power of chance, the ingenuity of accommodation, and the induſtry of reſearch, ought to try whether the ſame, or any thing like it, could be done, if Mahomet, or any other perſon, were propoſed as the ſubject of Jewiſh prophecy.

II. A ſecond head of argument from prophecy, is founded upon our Lord's predictions concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, recorded by three out of the four evangeliſts.

Luke xxi. 5—25. "And as ſome ſpake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly ſtones and gifts, he ſaid, As for theſe things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there ſhall not be left one ſtone upon another, that ſhall not be thrown down. And they aſked him, ſaying, Maſter, but when ſhall theſe things be? and what ſign ſhall there be when theſe things ſhall come to paſs? And he ſaid, Take heed that ye be not deceived, for many ſhall come in my name, ſaying, I am Chriſt; and the time draweth near. Go ye not therefore after them. But, when ye ſhall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for theſe things muſt firſt come to paſs, but the end is not by and by. Then ſaid he unto them, Nation ſhall riſe againſt nation, and kingdom againſt kingdom, and great earthquakes ſhall be in divers places, and famines and peſtilences: and fearful ſights, and great ſigns ſhall there be from heaven. But before all theſe, they ſhall lay their hands on you, and perſecute you, delivering you up to the ſynagogues, and into priſons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's ſake. And it ſhall turn to you for a teſtimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye ſhall anſwer; for I will give you a mouth and wiſdom, which all your adverſaries ſhall not be able to gainſay nor reſiſt. And ye ſhall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends; and ſome of you ſhall they cauſe to be put to death. And ye ſhall be hated of all men for my name's ſake. But there ſhall not an hair of your head periſh. In your patience poſſeſs ye your ſouls. And when ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then know that the deſolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midſt of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For theſe be the days of vengeance, that

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all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give ſuck, in thoſe days; for there ſhall be great diſtreſs in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they ſhall fall by the edge of the ſword, and ſhall be led away captive into all nations; and Jeruſalem ſhall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In terms nearly ſimilar, this diſcourſe is related in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the thirteenth of Mark. The proſpect of the ſame evils drew from our Saviour, upon another occaſion, the following affecting expreſſions of concern, which are preſerved by St. Luke (xix. 41): "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes; for the days ſhall come upon thee, that thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on every ſide, and ſhall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone upon another, becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation." Theſe paſſages are direct and explicit predictions. References to the ſame event, ſome plain, ſome parabolical, or otherwiſe figurative, are found in divers other diſcourſes of our Lord.[a]

The general agreement of the deſcriptions with the event, viz. with the ruin of the Jewiſh nation, and the capture of Jeruſalem under Veſpaſian, thirty-ſix years after Chriſt's death, is moſt evident: and the accordancy in various articles of detail and circumſtance has been ſhewn by many learned writers. It is alſo an advantage to the inquiry, and to the argument built upon it, that we have received a copious account of the tranſaction from Joſephus, a Jewiſh and contemporary hiſtorian. This part of the caſe is perfectly free from doubt. The only queſtion which, in my opinion, can be raiſed upon the ſubject, is whether the prophecy

[a] Mat. xxi. 33—46. xxii. 1—7. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xiii. 1—9. xx. 9—20. xxi. 5—13.

ecy was really delivered before the event. I ſhall apply, therefore, my obſervations to this point ſolely.

1. The judgment of antiquity, though varying in the preciſe year of the publication of the three goſpels, *concurs* in aſſigning them a date prior to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.[a]

2. This judgment is confirmed by a ſtrong probability ariſing from the courſe of human life. The deſtruction of Jeruſalem took place in the ſeventieth year after the birth of Chriſt. The three evangeliſts, one of whom was his immediate companion, and the other two aſſociated with his companions, were, it is probable, not much younger than he was. They muſt, conſequently, have been far advanced in life when Jeruſalem was taken; and no reaſon has been given why they ſhould defer writing their hiſtories ſo long.

3.[b] If the evangeliſts, at the time of writing the goſpels, had known of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by which catastrophe the prophecies were plainly fulfilled, it is moſt probable, that, in recording the predictions, they would have dropped ſome word or other about the completion; in like manner as Luke, after relating the denunciation of a dearth by Agabus, adds, "which came to paſs in the days of Claudius Cæſar:"[c] whereas the prophecies are given diſtinctly in one chapter of each of the three firſt goſpels, and referred to in ſeveral different paſſages of each, and, in none of all theſe places, does there appear the ſmalleſt intimation that the things ſpoken of were come to paſs. I do admit that it would have been the part of an impoſtor, who wiſhed his readers to believe that his book was written before the event, when in truth it was written after it, to have ſuppreſſed any ſuch intimation carefully. But this was not the character of the authors of the goſpel. Cunning was no quality of theirs. Of all writers in the world, they thought the leaſt of providing againſt

[a] Lardner, vol. XIII.
[b] Le Clerc. Diſſ. III. de quat. ev. Num. VII. p. 541.
[c] Acts xi. 28.

againſt objections. Moreover, there is no clauſe in any one of them, that makes a profeſſion of having written prior to the Jewiſh wars, which a fraudulent purpoſe would have led them to pretend. They have done neither one thing nor the other. They have neither inſerted any words, which might ſignify to the reader that their accounts were written *before* the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which a ſophiſt would have done; nor have they dropped a hint of the completion of the prophecies recorded by them, which an *undeſigning* writer, writing *after* the event, could hardly, on ſome or other of the many occaſions that preſented themſelves, have miſſed of doing.

4. The admonitions[a] which Chriſt is repreſented to have given to his followers to ſave themſelves by flight, are not eaſily accounted for upon the ſuppoſition of the prophecy being fabricated after the event. Either the Chriſtians, when the ſiege approached, did make their eſcape from Jeruſalem, or they did not: if they did, they muſt have had the prophecy amongſt them: If they did not know of any ſuch prediction at the time of the ſiege, if they did not take notice of any ſuch warning, it was an improbable fiction, in a writer publiſhing his work near to that time (which, upon any even the loweſt and moſt diſadvantageous ſuppoſition, was the caſe with the goſpels now in our hands) and addreſſing his work to Jews and to Jewiſh converts (which Matthew certainly did) to ſtate that the followers of Chriſt had received admonitions, of which they made no uſe when the occaſion arrived, and of which, experience then recent proved, that thoſe,

[a] Luke xxi. 20, 21. "When ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then know that the deſolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midſt of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto."

Mat. xiv. 18. "When ye ſhall ſee Jeruſalem compaſſed with armies, then let them which be in Judea flee unto the mountains; let him which is on the houſe top, not come down to take any thing out of his houſe, neither let him which is in the field, return back to take his clothes."

thoſe, who were moſt concerned to know and regard them, were ignorant or negligent. Even if the prophecies came to the hands of the evangeliſts through no better vehicle than tradition, it muſt have been by a tradition which ſubſiſted prior to the event. And to ſuppoſe, that, without any authority whatever, without ſo much as even any tradition to guide them, they had forged theſe paſſages, is to impute to them a degree of fraud and impoſture, from every appearance of which their compoſitions are as far removed as poſſible.

5. I think that, if the prophecies had been compoſed after the event, there would have been more ſpecification. The names or deſcriptions of the enemy, the general, the emperor would have been found in them. The deſignation of the time would have been more determinate. And I am fortified in this opinion by obſerving, that the counterfeited prophecies of the Sybilline oracles, of the twelve patriarchs, and, I am inclined to believe, moſt others of the kind, are mere tranſcripts of the hiſtory moulded into a prophetic form.

It is objected that the prophecy of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, is mixed, or connected with expreſſions, which relate to the final judgment of the world; and ſo connected, as to lead an ordinay reader to expect, that theſe two events would not be far diſtant from each other. To which I anſwer, that the objection does not concern our preſent argument. If our Saviour actually foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, it is ſufficient; even although we ſhould allow, that the narration of the prophecy had combined together what had been ſaid by him upon kindred ſubjects, without accurately preſerving the order, or always noticing the tranſition of the diſcourſe.

CHAP.

## CHAP. II.

### *The Morality of the Goſpel.*

IN ſtating the morality of the goſpel as an argument of its truth, I am willing to admit two points, firſt, that the teaching of morality was not the primary deſign of the miſſion; ſecondly, that morality, neither in the goſpel, nor in any other book, can be a ſubject, properly ſpeaking, of diſcovery.

If I were to deſcribe in a very few words the ſcope of Chriſtianity, as a *revelation*,[a] I ſhould ſay, that it was to influence the conduct of human life, by eſtabliſhing the proof of a future ſtate of reward and puniſhment—"to bring life and immortality to light." The direct object, therefore, of the deſign is to ſupply motives and not rules, ſanctions and not precepts. And theſe were what mankind ſtood moſt in need of. The members of civilized ſociety can, in all ordinary caſes, judge tolerably well how they ought to act; but without a future ſtate, or, which is the ſame thing, without credited evidence of that ſtate, they want a *motive* to their duty; they want at leaſt ſtrength of motive, ſufficient to bear up, againſt the force of paſſion, and the temptation of preſent advantage. Their rules want authority. The moſt important ſervice that can be rendered to human life, and that, conſequently, which, one might expect beforehand, would be the great end and office of a revelation from God, is to convey to the world authorized aſſurances of the reality of a future exiſtence. And although, in doing this, or by the miniſtry of the ſame perſon by which this is done, moral precepts, or examples, or illuſtrations of moral precepts may be occaſionally

[a] Great, and ineſtimably beneficial purpoſes, may be attained by Chriſt's miſſion, and eſpecially by his death, which do not belong to Chriſtianity as a *revelation*, that is, they might have exiſted, and they might have been accompliſhed, though we had never, in this life, have been made acquainted with them.

ally given, and be highly valuable, yet ſtill they do not form the original purpoſe of the miſſion.

Secondly, morality, neither in the goſpel, nor in any other book, can be a ſubject of diſcovery, properly ſo called. By which propoſition, I mean that there cannot, in morality, be any thing ſimilar to what are called diſcoveries in natural philoſophy, in the arts of life, and in ſome ſciences; as the ſyſtem of the univerſe, the circulation of the blood, the polarity of the magnet, the laws of gravitation, alphabetical writing, decimal arithmetic, and ſome other things of the ſame ſort; facts, or proofs, or contrivances, before totally unknown and unthought of. Whoever therefore expects, in reading the New Teſtament, to be ſtruck with diſcoveries in morals, in the manner in which his mind was affected, when he firſt came to the knowledge of the diſcoveries above-mentioned; or rather in the manner in which the world was affected by them, when they were firſt publiſhed; expects what, as I apprehend, the nature of the ſubject renders it impoſſible that he ſhould meet with. And the foundation of my opinion is this, that the qualities of actions depend entirely upon their effects, which effects muſt all along have been the ſubject of human experience.

When it is once ſettled, no matter upon what principle, that to do good is virtue, the reſt is calculation. But ſince the calculation cannot be inſtituted concerning each particular action, we eſtabliſh intermediate rules: by which proceeding, the buſineſs of morality is much facilitated, for then, it is concerning our rules alone that we need inquire, whether in their tendency they be beneficial; concerning our actions we have only to aſk, whether they be agreeable to the rules. We refer actions to rules, and rules to public happineſs. Now in the formation of theſe rules, there is no place for diſcovery properly ſo called, but there is ample room for the exerciſe of wiſdom, judgment, and prudence.

As I wiſh to deliver argument rather than panegyric, I ſhall treat of the morality of the goſpel, in ſubjection to theſe obſervations. And after all, I think it ſuch a mo-

rality, as, conſidering from whom it came, is moſt extraordinary; and ſuch, as, without allowing ſome degree of reality to the character and pretenſions of the religion, it is difficult to account for; or to place the argument ſomewhat lower in the ſcale, it is ſuch a morality, as completely repels the ſuppoſition of its being the tradition of a barbarous age or of a barbarous people, of the religion being founded in folly, or of its being the production of craft; and it repels alſo, in a great degree, the ſuppoſition of its having been the effuſion of an enthuſiaſtic mind.

The diviſion, under which the ſubject may be moſt conveniently treated of, is that of the things taught, and the manner of teaching.

Under the firſt head, I ſhould willingly, if the limits and nature of my work admitted of it, tranſcribe into this chapter the whole of what has been ſaid upon the morality of the goſpel, by the author of *the internal evidence of Chriſtianity*; becauſe it perfectly agrees with my own opinion, and becauſe it is impoſſible to ſay the ſame things ſo well. This acute obſerver of human nature, and, as I believe, ſincere convert to Chriſtianity, appears to me to have made out ſatisfactorily the two following poſitions, viz.

I. That the goſpel omits ſome qualities, which have uſually engaged the praiſes and admiration of mankind, but which, in reality, and in their general effects, have been prejudicial to human happineſs.

II. That the goſpel has brought forwards ſome virtues, which poſſeſs the higheſt intrinſic value, but which have commonly been overlooked and contemned.

The firſt of theſe propoſitions he exemplifies, in the inſtances of friendſhip, patriotiſm, active courage; in the ſenſe in which theſe qualities are uſually underſtood, and in the conduct which they often produce.

The ſecond, in the inſtances of paſſive courage or endurance of ſufferings, patience under affronts and injuries, humility, irreſiſtance, placability.

The truth is, there are two oppoſite deſcriptions of character, under which mankind may generally be claſſed.

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The one poſſeſſes vigour, firmneſs, reſolution, is daring and active, quick in its ſenſibilities, jealous of its fame, eager in its attachments, inflexible in its purpoſe, violent in its reſentments.

The other, meek, yielding, complying, forgiving; not prompt to act but willing to ſuffer, ſilent and gentle under rudeneſs and inſult, ſuing for reconciliation where others would demand ſatisfaction, giving way to the puſhes of impudence, conceding and indulgent to the prejudices, the wrong-headedneſs, the intractability of thoſe with whom it has to deal.

The former of theſe characters is, and ever hath been, the favourite of the world. It is the character of great men. There is a dignity in it which univerſally commands reſpect.

The latter is poorſpirited, tame, and abject. Yet ſo it hath happened, that, with the founder of Chriſtianity, this latter is the ſubject of his commendation, his precepts, his example; and that the former is ſo, in no part of its compoſition. This, and nothing elſe, is the character deſigned in the following remarkable paſſages: "Reſiſt not evil; but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo; and if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo; and whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain; love your enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you."[a] This certainly is not common-place morality. It is very original. It ſhows at leaſt (and it is for this purpoſe we produce it) that no two things can be more different than the heroic and the Chriſtian character.

Now the author, to whom I refer, has not only remarked this difference more ſtrongly than any preceding writer, but has proved, in contradiction to firſt impreſſions, to popular opinion, to the encomiums of orators and poets, and even to the ſuffrages of hiſtorians and moraliſts, that the latter character poſſeſſes the moſt of true worth, both

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as being moſt difficult either to be acquired or ſuſtained, and as contributing moſt to the happineſs and tranquillity of ſocial life. The ſtate of his argument is as follows:

I. If this diſpoſition were univerſal, the caſe is clear: the world would be a ſociety of friends. Whereas, if the other diſpoſition were univerſal, it would produce a ſcene of univerſal contention. The world could not hold a generation of ſuch men.

II. If, what is the fact, the diſpoſition be partial; if a few be actuated by it, amongſt a multitude who are not, in whatever degree it does prevail, in the ſame proportion it prevents, allays, and terminates quarrels, the great diſturbers of human happineſs, and the great ſources of human miſery, ſo far as man's happineſs and miſery depend upon man. Without this diſpoſition enmities muſt not only be frequent, but, once begun, muſt be eternal; for each retaliation being a freſh injury, and, conſequently, requiring a freſh *ſatisfaction*, no period can be aſſigned to the reciprocation of affronts, and to the progreſs of hatred, but that which cloſes the lives, or at leaſt the intercourſe, of the parties.

I would only add to theſe obſervations, that although the former of the two characters above deſcribed may be occaſionally uſeful, although, perhaps, a great general, or a great ſtateſman, may be formed by it, and theſe may be inſtruments of important benefits to mankind, yet is this nothing more than what is true of many qualities, which are acknowledged to be vicious. *Envy* is a quality of this ſort. I know not a ſtronger ſtimulus to exertion. Many a ſcholar, many an artiſt, many a ſoldier, has been produced by it. Nevertheleſs, ſince in its general effects it is noxious, it is properly condemned, certainly is not praiſed, by ſober moraliſts.

It was a portion of the ſame character as that we are defending, or rather of his love of the ſame character, which our Saviour diſplayed, in his repeated correction of the ambition of his diſciples; his frequent admonitions, that greatneſs with them was to conſiſt in humility; his

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cenſure of that love of diſtinction, and greedineſs of ſuperiority, which the chief perſons amongſt his countrymen were wont, on all occaſions, great and little, to betray. "They (the ſcribes and Phariſees) love the uppermoſt rooms at feaſts, and the chief ſeats in the ſynagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren; and call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven; neither be ye called maſters, for one is your Maſter, even Chriſt; but he that is greateſt among *you* ſhall be your ſervant, and whoſoever ſhall exalt himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that ſhall humble himſelf ſhall be exalted."[a] I make no farther remark upon theſe paſſages, (becauſe they are, in truth, only a repetition of the doctrine, different expreſſions of the principle, which we have already ſtated) except that ſome of the paſſages, eſpecially our Lord's advice to the gueſts at an entertainment, (Luke xiv. 7) ſeem to extend the rule to what we call *manners;* which was, both regular in point of conſiſtency, and not ſo much beneath the dignity of our Lord's miſſion as may at firſt ſight be ſuppoſed, for bad manners are bad morals.

It is ſufficiently apparent, that the precepts we have recited, or rather the diſpoſition which theſe precepts inculcate, relate to perſonal conduct from perſonal motives; to caſes in which men act from impulſe, for themſelves, and from themſelves. When it comes to be conſidered, what is neceſſary to be done for the ſake of the public, and out of a regard to the general welfare, (which conſideration, for the moſt part, ought excluſively to govern the duties of men in public ſtations) it comes to a caſe to which the rules do not belong. This diſtinction is plain; and, if it were leſs ſo, the conſequence would not be much felt, for it is very ſeldom that, in the intercourſe of private life, men act with public views. The perſonal motives, from which they do act, the rule regulates.



[a] Mat. xxiii. 6. See alſo Mark xii. 39. Luke xx. 43. xiv. 7.

The preference of the patient to the heroic character, which we have here noticed, and which the reader will find explained at large in the work to which we have referred him, is a peculiarity in the Chriſtian inſtitution, which I propoſe as an argument of wiſdom, very much beyond the ſituation and natural character of the perſon who delivered it.

II. A *ſecond* argument, drawn from the morality of the New Teſtament, is the ſtreſs which is laid by our Saviour upon the regulation of the thoughts. And I place this conſideration next to the other, becauſe they are connected. The other related to the malicious paſſions, this to the voluptuous. Together they comprehend the whole character.

"Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, &c.—Theſe are the things which defile a man." Mat. xv. 19.

"Woe unto you, ſcribes and Phariſees, hypocrites, for ye make clean the outſide of the cup and of the platter, but *within* they are full of extortion and exceſs.—Ye are like unto whited ſepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanneſs; even ſo ye alſo outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocriſy and iniquity." Mat. xxiii. 25, 27.

And more particularly that ſtrong expreſſion, (Mat. v. 28) "Whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

There can be no doubt with any reflecting mind, but that the propenſities of our nature muſt be ſubjected to regulation; but the queſtion is, where the check ought to be placed, upon the thought, or only upon action. In this queſtion our Saviour, in the texts here quoted, has pronounced a deciſive judgment. He makes the control of thought eſſential. Internal purity with him is every thing. Now I contend that this is the only diſcipline which can ſucceed; in other words, that a moral ſyſtem, which prohibits actions, but leaves the thoughts at liberty,

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will be ineffectual, and is therefore unwiſe. I know not how to go about the proof of a point, which depends upon experience, and upon a knowledge of the human conſtitution, better than by citing the judgment of perſons, who appear to have given great attention to the ſubject, and to be well qualified to form a true opinion about it. Boerhaave, ſpeaking of this very declaration of our Saviour, "whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart," and underſtanding it, as we do, to contain an injunction to lay the check upon the thoughts, was wont to ſay, that "our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates." Haller who has recorded this ſaying of Boerhaave's, adds to it the following remarks of his own:[a] "It did not eſcape the obſervation of our Saviour, that the rejection of any evil thoughts was the beſt defence againſt vice; for, when a debauched perſon fills his imagination with impure pictures, the licentious ideas which he recalls, fail not to ſtimulate his deſires with a degree of violence which he cannot reſiſt. This will be followed by gratification, unleſs ſome external obſtacle ſhould prevent him from the commiſſion of a ſin, which he had internally reſolved on." "Every moment of time (ſays our author) that is ſpent in meditations upon ſin, increaſes the power of the dangerous object which has poſſeſſed our imagination." I ſuppoſe theſe reflections will be generally aſſented to.

III. Thirdly, had a teacher of morality been aſked concerning a general principle of conduct, and for a ſhort rule of life; and had he inſtructed the perſon who conſulted him, "conſtantly to refer his actions to what he believed to be the will of his Creator, and conſtantly to have in view, not his own intereſt and gratification alone, but the happineſs and comfort of thoſe about him," he would have been thought, I doubt not, in any age of the world, and in any, even the moſt improved ſtate of morals to have delivered a judicious anſwer; becauſe, by the firſt direction, he ſuggeſted the only motive which acts ſteadily

[a] Letters to his daughter.

ly and uniformly, in ſight and out of ſight, in familiar occurrences and under preſſing temptations; and in the ſecond, he corrected, what, of all tendencies in the human character, ſtands moſt in need of correction, *ſelfiſhneſs*, a contempt of other men's conveniency and ſatisfaction. In eſtimating the value of a moral rule, we are to have regard, not only to the particular duty, but the general ſpirit; not only to what it directs us to do, but to the character which a compliance with its direction is likely to form in us. So, in the preſent inſtance, the rule here recited will never fail to make him who obeys it, *conſiderate*, not only of the rights, but of the feelings of other men, bodily and mental, in great matters and in ſmall, of the eaſe, the accommodation, the ſelf-complacency of all with whom he has any concern, eſpecially of all who are in his power, or dependent upon his will.

Now what, in the moſt applauded philoſopher of the moſt enlightened age of the world, would have been deemed worthy of his wiſdom, and of his character, to ſay, our Saviour hath ſaid, and upon juſt ſuch an occaſion as that which we have feigned.

"Then one of them, which was a lawyer, aſked him a queſtion, tempting him, and ſaying, Maſter, which is the great commandment in the law. Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind; this is the firſt and great commandment; and the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf: on theſe two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Mat. xxii. 35—40.

The ſecond precept occurs in St. Matthew, on another occaſion ſimilar to this, (xix. 16) and both of them upon a third ſimilar occaſion in Luke (x. 27) In theſe two latter inſtances, the queſtion propoſed was, "What ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Upon all theſe occaſions, I conſider the words of our Saviour as expreſſing preciſely the ſame thing as what I have put into the mouth of the moral philoſopher. Nor

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do I think that it detracts much from the merit of the answer, that these precepts are extant in the Mosaic code; for his laying his finger, if I may so say, upon these precep ts, his drawing them out from the rest of that voluminous institution, his stating of them, not simply amongst the number, but as the greatest and the sum of all the others, in a word, his proposing of them to his hearers for their rule and principle, was our Saviour's own.

And what our Saviour had said upon the subject, appears to me to have *fixed* the sentiment amongst his followers.

St. Paul has it expressly, "if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;"[a] and again, "for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."[b]

St. John, in like manner, "this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also."[c]

St. Peter, not very differently, "seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently."[d]

And it is so well known, as to require no citations to verify it, that this love, or charity, or, in other words, regard to the welfare of others, runs in various forms through all the preceptive parts of the apostolic writings. It is the theme of all their exhortations, that with which their morality begins and ends, from which all their details and enumerations set out, and into which they return.

And that this temper, for some time at least, descended in its purity to succeeding Christians, is attested by one of the earliest and best of the remaining writings of the apostolical fathers, the epistle of the Roman Clement. The meekness of the Christian character reigns throughout the whole of that excellent piece. The occasion called for it.

[a] Rom. xiii. 7. [b] Gal. v. 14.
[c] 1 John iv. 21. [d] 1 Pet. i. 22.

it. It was to compoſe the diſſenſions of the church of Corinth. And the venerable hearer of the apoſtles does not fall ſhort, in the diſplay of this principle, of the fineſt paſſages of their writings. He calls to the remembrance of the Corinthian church its former character, in which "ye were all of you (he tells them) humble minded, not boaſting of any thing, deſiring rather to be ſubject than to govern, to give than to receive, being content with the portion God had diſpenſed to you, and hearkening diligently to his word, ye were enlarged in your bowels, having his ſufferings always before your eyes. Ye contended day and night for the whole brotherhood, that with compaſſion and a good conſcience the number of his elect might be ſaved. Ye were ſincere, and without offence, towards each other. Ye bewailed every one his neighbours ſins, eſteeming their defects your own."[a] His prayer for them was for the "return of peace, long-ſuffering, and patience."[b] And his advice to thoſe, who might have been the occaſion of difference in the ſociety, is conceived in the true ſpirit, and with a perfect knowledge of the Chriſtian character. "Who is there among you that is generous? Who that is compaſſionate? Who that has any charity? Let him ſay, if this ſedition, this contention, and theſe ſchiſms, be upon my account, I am ready to depart, to go away whitherſoever ye pleaſe, and do whatſoever ye ſhall command me, only let the flock of Chriſt be in peace, with the elders who are ſet over it. He that ſhall do this, ſhall get to himſelf a very great honour in the Lord; and there is no place but what will be ready to receive him, for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulneſs thereof. Theſe things they, who have their converſation towards God, not to be repented of, both have done, and will always be ready to do."[c]

This ſacred principle, this earneſt recommendation of forbearance, lenity, and forgiveneſs, mixes with all the writings of that age. There are more quotations in the apoſtolical

[a] Ep. Clem. Rom. c. 2. A. B. Wake's Tranſlation.
[b] Ib. c. 58. [c] Ib. c. 54.

apoſtolical fathers of texts which relate to theſe points, than of any other. Chriſt's ſayings had ſtruck them. "Not rendering (ſaith Polycarp, the diſciple of John) evil for evil, or railing for railing, or ſtriking for ſtriking, or curſing for curſing."[a] Again, ſpeaking of ſome whoſe behaviour had given great offence, "Be ye moderate (ſays he) upon this occaſion, and look not upon ſuch as enemies, but call them back as ſuffering and erring members, that ye ſave your whole body."[b]

"Be ye mild at their anger, (ſaith Ignatius, the companion of Polycarp) humble at their boaſtings, to their blaſphemies return your prayers, to their error your firmneſs in the faith; when they are cruel, be ye gentle; not endeavouring to imitate their ways, let us be their brethren in all kindneſs and moderation, but let us be followers of the Lord, for who was ever more unjuſtly uſed, more deſtitute, more deſpiſed?"

IV. A fourth quality, by which the morality of the goſpel is diſtinguiſhed, is the excluſion of regard to fame and reputation.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be ſeen of them, otherwiſe ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."[c]

"When thou prayeſt, enter into thy cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret; and thy Father, which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly."[d]

And the rule by parity of reaſon is extended to all other virtues.

I do not think, that either in theſe, or in any other paſſage of the New Teſtament, the purſuit of fame is ſtated as a vice; it is only ſaid that an action, to be virtuous, muſt be independent of it. I would alſo obſerve, that it is not publicity, but oſtentation, which is prohibited; not the mode, but the motive of the action, which is regulated. A good man will perfer that mode, as well as thoſe objects

[a] Pol. Ep. ad. Phil. c. 2. [b] Ib. c. 11.

[c] Mat. vi. 1. [d] Mat. vi. 6.

objects of his beneficence, by which he can produce the greatest effect; and the view of this purpose may dictate sometimes publication, and sometimes concealment. Either the one or the other may be the *mode* of the action, according as the end to be promoted by it appears to require. But from the *motive*, the reputation of the deed, and the fruits and advantage of that reputation to ourselves, must be shut out, or, in whatever proportion they are not so, the action in that proportion fails of being virtuous.

This exclusion of regard to human opinion, is a difference, not so much in the duties, to which the teachers of virtue would persuade mankind, as in the manner and topics of persuasion. And in this view the difference is great. When *we* set about to give advice, our lectures are full of the advantages of character, of the regard that is due to appearances and to opinion; of what the world, especially of what the good or great, will think and say; of the value of public esteem, and of the qualities by which men acquire it. Widely different from this was our Saviour's instruction: and the difference was founded upon the best reasons. For, however the care of reputation, the authority of public opinion, or even of the opinion of good men, the satisfaction of being well received and well thought of, the benefit of being known and distinguished, are topics, to which we are fain to have recourse in our exhortations, the true virtue is that which discards these considerations absolutely; and which retires from them all to the single internal purpose of pleasing God. This at least was the virtue which our Saviour taught. And in teaching of this, he not only confined the views of his followers to the proper measure and principle of human duty, but acted in consistency with his office as a monitor from heaven.

Next to what our Saviour taught, may be considered the manner of his teaching; which was extremely peculiar, yet, I think, precisely adapted to the peculiarity of his character and situation. His lessons did not consist of disquisitions;

quiſitions; of any thing like moral eſſays, or like ſermons, or like ſet treatiſes upon the ſeveral points which he mentioned. When he delivered a precept, it was ſeldom that he added any proof or argument; ſtill ſeldomer, that he accompained it with, what all precepts require, limitations and diſtinctions. His inſtructions were conceived in ſhort emphatic rules, in occaſional reflections, or in round maxims. I do not think that this was a natural, or would have been a proper method, for a philoſopher or a moraliſt; or that it is a method which can be ſucceſsfully imitated by us. But I contend that it was ſuitable to the character which Chriſt aſſumed, and to the ſituation in which, as a teacher, he was placed. He produced himſelf as a meſſenger from God. He put the truth of what he taught upon authority. In the choice, therefore, of his mode of teaching, the purpoſe by him to be conſulted was *impreſſion*; becauſe conviction, which forms the principal end of our diſcourſes, was to ariſe in the minds of his followers from a different ſource, from their reſpect to his perſon and authority. Now, for the purpoſe of impreſſion ſingly and excluſively (I repeat again, that we are not here to conſider the convincing of the underſtanding) I know nothing which would have ſo great force, as ſtrong ponderous maxims, frequently urged, and frequently brought back to the thoughts of the hearers. I know nothing that could in this view be ſaid better, than "do unto others, as ye would that others ſhould do unto you; the firſt and great commandment is, Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God; and the ſecond is like unto it, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf." It muſt alſo be remembered, that our Lord's miniſtry, upon the ſuppoſition either of one year or of three, compared with his work, was of ſhort duration; that, within this time, he had many places to viſit, various audiences to addreſs; that his perſon was generally beſieged by crowds of followers, that he was, ſometimes, driven away from the place where he was teaching by perſecution, and, at other times, thought fit to withdraw himſelf from the commotions of the populace. Under theſe circumſtances, nothing ap-

pears to have been ſo practicable, or likely to be ſo efficacious, as leaving, whereever he came, conciſe leſſons of duty. Theſe circumſtances at leaſt ſhow the neceſſity he was under of compriſing what he delivered within a ſmall compaſs. In particular, his ſermon upon the mount ought always to be conſidered with a view to theſe obſervations. The queſtion is not, whether a fuller, a more acurate, a more ſyſtematic, or a more argumentative diſcourſe upon morals might not have been pronounced, but whether more could have been ſaid in the ſame room, better adapted to the exigencies of the hearers, or better calculated for the purpoſe of impreſſion. Seen in this light, it hath always appeared to me to be admirable. Dr. Lardner thought that this diſcourſe was made up of what Chriſt had ſaid at different times, and upon different occaſions, ſeveral of which occaſions are noticed in St. Luke's narrative. I can perceive no reaſon for this opinion. I believe that our Lord delivered this diſcourſe at one time and place, in the manner related by St. Matthew, and that he repeated the ſame rules and maxims at different times, as opportunity or occaſion ſuggeſted; that they were often in his mouth, were repeated to different audiences, and in various converſations.

It is incidental to this mode of moral inſtruction, which proceeds not by proof but upon authority, not by diſquiſition but by precept, that the rules will be conceived in abſolute terms, leaving the application, and the diſtinctions that attend it, to the reaſon of the hearer. It is likewiſe to be expected, that they will be delivered in terms, by ſo much the more forcible and energetic, as they have to encounter natural or general propenſities. It is further alſo to be remarked, that many of thoſe ſtrong inſtances which appear in our Lord's ſermon, ſuch as "if any man will ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo; if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo; whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain;" though they appear in the form of ſpecific precepts,

cepts, are intended as deſcriptive of diſpoſition and character. A ſpecific compliance with the precepts would be of little value, but the diſpoſition which they inculcate is of the higheſt. He who ſhould content himſelf with waiting for the occaſion, and with literally obſerving the rule when the occaſion offered, would do nothing, or worſe than nothing; but he who conſiders the character and diſpoſition which is hereby inculcated, and places that diſpoſition before him as the model to which he ſhould bring his own, takes, perhaps, the beſt poſſible method of improving the benevolence, and of calming and rectifying the vices of his temper. If it be ſaid that this diſpoſition is unattainable, I anſwer, ſo is all perfection; ought therefore a moraliſt to recommend imperfections? One excellency, however, of our Saviour's rules is, that they are either never miſtaken, or never ſo miſtaken as to do harm. I could feign a hundred caſes, in which the literal application of the rule, "of doing to others as we would that others ſhould do unto us," might miſlead us; but I never yet met with the man who was actually miſled by it. Notwithſtanding that our Lord bid his followers "not to reſiſt evil," and "to forgive the enemy, who ſhould treſpaſs againſt them, not till ſeven times but till ſeventy times ſeven," the Chriſtian world has hitherto ſuffered little by too much placability or forbearance. I would repeat once more, what has already been twice remarked, that theſe rules were deſigned to regulate perſonal conduct from perſonal motives, and for this purpoſe alone.

I think that theſe obſervations will aſſiſt us greatly in placing our Saviour's conduct, as a moral teacher, in a proper point of view; eſpecially when it is conſidered, that to deliver moral diſquiſitions was no part of his deſign, to teach morality at all was only a ſubordinate part of it, his great buſineſs being to ſupply, what was much more wanting than leſſons of morality, ſtronger moral ſanctions, and clearer aſſurances of a future judgment.[a] The

[a] Some appear to require in a religious ſyſtem, or in the books which profeſs to deliver that ſyſtem, minute directions for every caſe

The *parables* of the New Teſtament are, many of them, ſuch as would have done honour to any book in the world, I do not mean in ſtyle and diction, but in the choice of the ſubjects, in the ſtructure of the narratives, in the aptneſs, propriety, and force of the circumſtances woven into them; and in ſome, as that of the good Samaritan, the prodigal ſon, the Phariſee and the publican, in an union of pathos and ſimplicity, which, in the beſt productions of human genius, is the fruit only of a much exerciſed and well-cultivated judgment.

*The Lord's prayer*, for a ſucceſſion of ſolemn thoughts, for fixing the attention upon a few great points, for ſuitableneſs to every condition, for ſufficiency, for conciſeneſs without obſcurity, for the weight and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival.

From whence did theſe come? Whence had this man this wiſdom? Was our Saviour, in fact, a well-inſtructed philoſopher, whilſt he is repreſented to us as an illiterate peaſant? Or ſhall we ſay that ſome early Chriſtians of taſte and education compoſed theſe pieces, and aſcribed them to Chriſt? Beſide all other incredibilities in this account, I anſwer, with Dr. Jortin, that they could not do it. No ſpecimens of compoſition, which the Chriſtians of the firſt century have left us, authorize us to believe that they were equal to the taſk. And how little qualified the Jews, the countrymen and companions of Chriſt, were to aſſiſt him in the undertaking, may be judged of from

caſe and occurrence that may ariſe. This, ſay they, is neceſſary to render a revelation perfect, eſpecially one which has for its object the regulation of human conduct. Now, how prolix, and yet how incomplete and unavailing, ſuch an attempt muſt have been, is proved by one notable example, "The Indoo and Muſſulman religion are inſtitutes of civil law, regulating the minuteſt queſtions both of property, and of all queſtions which come under the cognizance of the magiſtrate. And to what length details of this kind are neceſſarily carried, when once begun, may be underſtood from an anecdote of the Muſſulman code, which we have received from the moſt reſpectable authority, that not leſs than *ſeventy five thouſand* traditional precepts have been promulgated." Hamilton's tranſlation of the Hedaya, or Guide.

from the traditions and writings of theirs which were the neareſt to that age. The whole collection of the Talmud is one continued proof, into what follies they fell whenever they left their Bible; and how little capable they were of furniſhing out ſuch leſſons as Chriſt delivered.

But there is ſtill another view, in which our Lord's diſcourſes deſerve to be conſidered; and that is, in their *negative* character, not in what they did, but in what they did not contain. Under this head, the following reflections appear to me to poſſeſs ſome weight.

I. They exhibit no particular deſcription of the inviſible world. The future happineſs of the good, and the miſery of the bad, which is all we want to be aſſured of, is directly and poſitively affirmed, and is repreſented by metaphors and compariſons, which were plainly intended as metaphors and compariſons, and as nothing more. As to the reſt, a ſolemn reſerve is maintained. The queſtion concerning the woman who had been married to ſeven brothers, "whoſe ſhall ſhe be on the reſurrection?" was of a nature calculated to have drawn from Chriſt a more circumſtantial account of the ſtate of the human ſpecies in their future exiſtence. He cut ſhort, however, the inquiry by an anſwer, which at once rebuked vain and intruding curioſity, and was agreeable to the beſt apprehenſions we are able to form upon the ſubject, viz. "that they who are accounted worthy of that reſurrection, ſhall be as the angels of God in heaven." I lay a ſtreſs upon this reſerve, becauſe it repels the ſuſpicion of enthuſiaſm; for enthuſiaſm is wont to expatiate upon the condition of the departed, above all other ſubjects; and with a wild particularity. It is moreover a topic which is always liſtened to with greedineſs. The teacher, therefore, whoſe principal purpoſe is to draw upon himſelf attention, is ſure to be full of it. The Koran of Mahomet is half made up of it.

II. Our Lord enjoined no auſterities. He not only enjoined none as abſolute duties, but he recommended none as carrying men to a higher degree of divine favour. Place Chriſtianity, in this reſpect, by the ſide of all inſtitutions

which have been founded in the fanaticiſm, either of their author, or of his firſt followers: or rather compare in this reſpect, Chriſtianity as it came from Chriſt, with the ſame religion after it fell into other hands; with the extravagant merit very ſoon aſcribed to celibacy, ſolitude, voluntary poverty; with the rigours of an aſcetic, and the vows of a monaſtic life, the hair ſhirt, the watchings, the midnight prayers, the obmuteſcence, the gloom and mortification of religious orders, and of thoſe who aſpired to religious perfection.

III. Our Saviour uttered no impaſſioned devotion. There was no heat in his piety, or in the language in which he expreſſed it; no vehement or rapturous ejaculations; no violent urgency in his prayers. The Lord's prayer is a model of calm devotion. His words in the garden are unaffected expreſſions, of a deep indeed, but ſober piety. He never appears to have been worked up into any thing like that elation, or that emotion of ſpirits, which is occaſionally obſerved in moſt of thoſe, to whom the name of enthuſiaſt can in any degree be applied. I feel a reſpect for Methodiſts, becauſe I believe that there is to be found amongſt them much ſincere piety, and availing, though not always well-informed Chriſtianity; yet I never attended a meeting of theirs, but I came away with the reflection, how different what I heard was from what I read; I do not mean in doctrine, with which, at preſent, I have no concern, but in manner; how different from the calmneſs, the ſobriety, the good ſenſe, and, I may add, the ſtrength and authority of our Lord's diſcourſes.

IV. It is very uſual with the human mind, to ſubſtitute forwardneſs and fervency in a particular cauſe, for the merit of general and regular morality; and it is natural, and politic alſo, in the leader of a ſect or party, to encourage ſuch a diſpoſition in his followers. Chriſt did not overlook this turn of thought; yet, though avowedly placing himſelf at the head of a new inſtitution, he notices it only to condemn it. "Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth

doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven: Many will ſay unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profeſs unto you, I never knew you, depart from me, *ye that work iniquity*."[a] So far was the author of Chriſtianity from courting the attachment of his followers by any ſacrifice of principle, or by a condeſcenſion to the errors which even zeal in his ſervice might have inſpired. This was a proof both of ſincerity and judgment.

V. Nor, fifthly, did he fall in with any of the depraved faſhions of his country, or with the natural bias of his own education. Bred up a Jew, under a religion extremely technical, in an age, and amongſt a people, more tenacious of the ceremonies, than of any other part of that religion, he delivered an inſtitution, containing leſs of ritual, and that more ſimple, than is to be found in any religion, which ever prevailed amongſt mankind. We have known, I do allow, examples of an enthuſiaſm, which has ſwept away all external ordinances before it. But this ſpirit certainly did not dictate our Saviour's conduct, either in his treatment of the religion of his country, or in the formation of his own inſtitution. In both he diſplayed the ſoundneſs and moderation of his judgment. He cenſured an overſtrained ſcrupulouſneſs, or perhaps an affectation of ſcrupulouſneſs, about the Sabbath; but how did he cenſure it? not by contemning or decrying the inſtitution itſelf, but by declaring that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;" that is to ſay, that the Sabbath was to be ſubordinate to its purpoſe, and that that purpoſe was the real good of thoſe who were the ſubjects of the law. The ſame concerning the nicety of ſome of the Phariſees, in paying tythes of the moſt trifling articles, accompanied with a neglect of juſtice, fidelity, and mercy. He finds fault with them for miſplacing their anxiety. He does not ſpeak diſreſpectfully of the law of tythes, or of their obſervance of it, but he aſſigns to ſuch claſs of duties its

[a] Mat. vii. 21, 22.

its proper ſtation in the ſcale of moral importance. All this might be expected perhaps from a well-inſtructed, cool, and judicious philoſopher, but was not to be looked for from an illiterate Jew, certainly not from an impetuous enthuſiaſt.

VI. Nothing could be more quibbling, than were the comments and expoſitions of the Jewiſh doctors, at that time; nothing ſo puerile as their diſtinctions. Their evaſion of the fifth commandment, their expoſition of the law of oaths, are ſpecimens of the bad taſte in morals which then prevailed. Whereas in a numerous collection of our Saviour's apothegms, many of them referring to ſundry precepts of the Jewiſh law, there is not to be found one example of ſophiſtry, or of falſe ſubtlety, or of any thing approaching thereto.

VII. The national temper of the Jews was intolerant, narrow-minded, and excluding. In Jeſus, on the contrary, whether we regard his leſſons or his example, we ſee not only benevolence, but benevolence the moſt enlarged and comprehenſive. In the parable of the good Samaritan, the very point of the ſtory is, that the perſon relieved by him, was the national and religious enemy of his benefactor. Our Lord declared the equity of the divine adminiſtration, when he told the Jews (what, probably, they were ſurpriſed to hear) "that many ſhould come from the eaſt and weſt, and ſhould ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but that the children of the kingdom ſhould be caſt into outer darkneſs."[a] His reproof of the haſty zeal of his diſciples, who would needs call down fire from heaven to revenge an affront put upon their Maſter, ſhows the lenity of his character, and of his religion; and his opinion of the manner in which the moſt unreaſonable opponents ought to be treated, or at leaſt of the manner in which they ought not to be treated. The terms, in which his rebuke was conveyed, deſerve to be noticed:—"Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of."[b]

VIII. Laſtly,

[a] Mat. viii. 11. [b] Luke ix. 55.

VIII. Laſtly, amongſt the negative qualities of our religion, as it came out of the hands of its Founder and his apoſtles, we may reckon its complete abſtraction from all views either of eccleſiaſtical or civil policy; or, to meet a language much in faſhion with ſome men, from the politics either of prieſts or ſtateſmen. Chriſt's declaration, that "his kingdom was not of this world," recorded by John; his evaſion of the queſtion, whether it was lawful or not to give tribute unto Cæſar, mentioned by the three other evangeliſts; his reply to an application that was made to him, to interpoſe his authority in a queſtion of property, "Man, who made me a ruler or a judge over you?" aſcribed to him by St. Luke; his declining to exerciſe the office of a criminal judge in the caſe of the woman taken in adultery, as related by John, are all intelligible ſignifications of our Saviour's ſentiments upon this head. And with reſpect to *politics*, in the uſual ſenſe of that word, or diſcuſſions concerning different forms of government, Chriſtianity declines every queſtion upon the ſubject. Whilſt politicians are diſputing about monarchies, ariſtocracies, and republics, Chriſtianity is alike applicable, uſeful, and friendly to them all; inaſmuch as, 1ſt, it tends to make men virtuous, and as it is eaſier to govern good men than bad men under any conſtitution: as, 2dly, it ſtates obedience to government in ordinary caſes, to be not merely a ſubmiſſion to force, but a duty of conſcience: as, 3dly, it induces diſpoſitions favourable to public tranquillity, a Chriſtian's chief care being, to paſs quietly through this world to a better: as, 4thly, it prays for communities, and for the governors of communities, of whatever deſcription or denomination they be, with a ſolicitude and fervency proportioned to the influence which they poſſeſs upon human happineſs. All which, in my opinion, is juſt as it ſhould be. Had there been more to be found in ſcripture of a political nature, or convertible to political purpoſes, the worſt uſe would have been made of it, on whichever ſide it ſeemed to lie.

When, therefore, we conſider Chriſt as a moral teacher

er (remembering that this was only a ſecondary part of his office; and that morality, by the nature of the ſubject, does not admit of diſcovery, properly ſo called) when we conſider, either what he taught, or what he did not teach, either the ſubſtance or the manner of his inſtruction; his preference of ſolid to popular virtues, of a character which is commonly deſpiſed, to a character which is univerſally extolled; his placing, in our licentious vices, the check in the right place, viz. upon the thoughts; his collecting of human duty into two well-deviſed rules, his repetition of theſe rules, the ſtreſs he laid upon them, eſpecially in compariſon with poſitive duties, and his fixing thereby the ſentiments of his followers; his excluſion of all regard to reputation in our devotion and alms, and, by parity of reaſon, in our other virtues: when we conſider that his inſtructions were delivered in a form calculated for impreſſion, the preciſe purpoſe in his ſituation to be conſulted; and that they were illuſtrated by parables, the choice, and ſtructure of which would have been admired in any compoſition whatever; when we obſerve him free from the uſual ſymptoms of enthuſiaſm, heat and vehemence in devotion, auſterity in inſtitutions, and a wild particularity in the deſcriptions of a future ſtate; free alſo from the depravities of his age and country, without ſuperſtition amongſt the moſt ſuperſtitious of men, yet not decrying poſitive diſtinctions or external obſervances, but ſoberly recalling them to the principle of their eſtabliſhment, and to their place in the ſcale of human duties; without ſophiſtry or trifling, amidſt teachers remarkable for nothing ſo much as frivolous ſubtleties and quibbling expoſitions; candid and liberal in his judgment of the reſt of mankind, although belonging to a people, who affected a ſeparate claim to divine favour, and, in conſequence of that opinion, prone to uncharitableneſs, partiality, and reſtriction; when we find, in his religion, no ſcheme of building up a hierarchy, or of miniſtering to the views of human governments: in a word, when we compare Chriſtianity, as it came from its author, either with other religions, or with

itſelf

itſelf in other hands ; the moſt reluctant underſtanding will be induced to acknowledge the probity, I think alſo, the good ſenſe of thoſe, to whom it owes its origin ; and that ſome regard is due to the teſtimony of ſuch men, when they declare their knowledge that the religion proceeded from God ; and when they appeal, for the truth of their aſſertion, to miracles which they wrought, or which they ſaw.

Perhaps the qualities which we obſerve in the religion, may be thought to prove ſomething more. They would have been extraordinary, had the religion come from any perſon ; from the perſon, from whom it did come, they are exceedingly ſo. What was Jeſus in external appearance ? a Jewiſh peaſant, the ſon of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote province of Paleſtine, until the time that he produced himſelf in his public character. He had no maſter to inſtruct or prompt him. He had read no books, but the works of Moſes and the prophets. He had viſited no poliſhed cities. He had received no leſſons from Socrates or Plato ; nothing to form in him a taſte or judgment, different from that of the reſt of his countrymen, and of perſons of the ſame rank of life with himſelf. Suppoſing it to be true, which it is not, that all his points of morality might be picked out of Greek and Roman writings, they were writings which *he* had never ſeen. Suppoſing them to be no more, than what ſome or other had taught in various times and places, he could not collect them together.

Who were his coadjutors in the undertaking, the perſons into whoſe hands the religion came after his death ? a few fiſhermen upon the lake of Tiberias, perſons juſt as uneducated, and for the purpoſe of framing rules of morality, as unpromiſing as himſelf. Suppoſe the miſſion to be real, all this is accounted for ; the unſuitableneſs of the authors to the production, of the characters to the undertaking, no longer ſurpriſes us ; but, without *reality*, it is very difficult to explain how ſuch a ſyſtem ſhould proceed from

from ſuch perſons. Chriſt was not like any other carpenter; the apoſtles were not like any other fiſhermen.

But the ſubject is not exhauſted by theſe obſervations. That portion of it, which is moſt reducible to points of argument, has been ſtated, and I truſt truly. There are, however, ſome topics, of a more diffuſe nature, which yet deſerve to be propoſed to the reader's attention.

The character of Chriſt is a part of the morality of the goſpel: one ſtrong obſervation upon which is, that, neither as repreſented by his followers, nor as attacked by his enemies, is he charged with any perſonal vice. This remark is as old as Origen:—"Though innumerable lies and calumnies had been forged againſt the venerable Jeſus, none had dared to charge him with any intemperance."[a] Not a reflection upon his moral character, not an imputation or ſuſpicion of any offence againſt purity and chaſtity, appears for five hundred years after his birth. This faultleſsneſs is more peculiar than we are apt to imagine. Some ſtain pollutes the morals or the morality of almoſt every other teacher, and of every other law-giver.[b] Zeno the ſtoic, and Diogenes the cynic, fell into the fouleſt impurities; of which alſo Socrates himſelf was more than ſuſpected. Solon forbad unnatural crimes to ſlaves. Lycurgus tolerated theft as a part of education. Plato recommended a community of women. Ariſtotle maintained the general right of making war upon Barbarians. The elder Cato was remarkable for the ill uſage of his ſlaves. The younger gave up the perſon of his wife. One looſe principle is found in almoſt all the Pagan moraliſts; is diſtinctly, however, perceived in the writings of Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and that is, the allowing, and even the recommending to their diſciples a compliance with the religion, and with the religious rites, of every country into which they came. In ſpeaking of the founders of new inſtitutions, we cannot forget Mahomet.

[a] Or. Ep. Celſ. l. 3. Num. 36. ed. Bened.

[b] See many inſtances collected by Grotius de Ver. in the notes to his ſecond book, p. 116. Pocock's edition.

homet. His licentious tranſgreſſions of his own licentious rules; his abuſe of the character which he aſſumed, and of the power which he had acquired, for the purpoſes of perſonal and privileged indulgence; his avowed claim of a ſpecial permiſſion from heaven of unlimited ſenſuality, is known to every reader, as it is confeſſed by every writer, of the Moſlem ſtory.

Secondly, in the hiſtories which are left us of Jeſus Chriſt, although very ſhort, and although dealing in narrative, and not in obſervation or panegyric, we perceive, beſide the abſence of every appearance of vice, traces of devotion, humility, benignity, mildneſs, patience, prudence. I ſpeak of *traces* of theſe qualities, becauſe the qualities themſelves are to be collected from incidents; inaſmuch as the terms are never uſed of Chriſt in the goſpels, nor is any formal character of him drawn in any part of the New Teſtament.

Thus we ſee the *devoutneſs* of his mind, in his frequent retirement to ſolitary prayer,[a] in his habitual giving of thanks,[b] in his reference of the beauties and operations of nature to the bounty of providence;[c] in his earneſt addreſſes to his Father, more particularly that ſhort but ſolemn one before the raiſing of Lazarus from the dead;[d] and in the deep piety of his behaviour in the garden, on the laſt evening of his life;[e] his *humility*, in his conſtant reproof of contentions for ſuperiority[f] the *benignity* and affectionateneſs of his temper in his kindneſs to children;[g] in the tears which he ſhed over his falling country;[h] and upon the death of his friend;[i] in his noticing of the widow's mite;[k] in his parables of the good Samaritan, of the ungrateful ſervant, and of the Phariſee and publican, of which parables no one but a man of humanity could have been the author: the *mildneſs* and lenity of



[a] Mat. xiv. 23. ix. 28. xxvi. 36.
[b] Mat. xi. 25. Mark viii. 6. John vi. 23. Luke xxii. 18.
[c] Mat. vi. 26, 28. [d] John xi. 41. [e] Mat. xxvi.
[f] Mark ix. 33. [g] Ib. x. 16. [h] Luke xix. 41. [i] John xi. 35.
[k] Mark xii. 42.

his character is diſcovered, in his rebuke of the forward zeal of his diſciples at the Samaritan village,[a] in his expoſtulation with Pilate,[b] in his prayer for his enemies at the moment of his ſuffering,[c] which, though it has been ſince very properly and frequently imitated, was then, I apprehend, new. His *prudence* is diſcerned, where prudence is moſt wanted, in his conduct upon trying occaſions, and in anſwers to artful queſtions. Of theſe the following are examples:—His withdrawing, in various inſtances, from the firſt ſymptoms of tumult,[d] and with the expreſs care, as appears from St. Matthew,[e] of conducting his miniſtry in quietneſs; his declining of every ſpecies of interference with the civil affairs of the country, which diſpoſition is manifeſted by his conduct in the caſe of the woman caught in adultery,[f] and in his repulſe of the application which was made to him, to interpoſe his deciſion about a diſputed inheritance;[g] his judicious, yet, as it ſhould ſeem, unprepared anſwers, will be confeſſed in the caſe of the Roman tribute,[h] in the difficulty concerning the interfering relations of a future ſtate, as propoſed to him in the inſtance of a woman who had married ſeven brethren;[i] and, more eſpecially, in his reply to thoſe who demanded from him an explanation of the authority by which he acted, which reply conſiſted, in propounding a queſtion to them, ſituated between the very difficulties, into which they were inſidiouſly endeavouring to draw *him*.[k]

Our Saviour's leſſons, beſide what has already been remarked in them, touch, and that oftentimes by very affecting repreſentations, upon ſome of the moſt intereſting topics of human duty, and of human meditation; upon the principles, by which the deciſions of the laſt day will be regulated,[l] upon the ſuperior, or rather the ſupreme importance

[a] Luke ix. 55. [b] John xix. 11. [c] Luke xxiii. 34.
[d] Mat. xiv. 22. Luke v. 15, 16. John v. 13. vi. 15.
[e] xii. 19. [f] John viii. 1. [g] Luke xii. 14.
[h] Mat. xxii. 19. [i] Ib. 28. [k] xxi. 23. et. ſeq.
[l] Mat. xxv. 31. et. ſeq.

importance of religion,[a] upon penitence, by the moſt preſſing calls, and the moſt encouraging invitations,[b] upon ſelf-denial,[c] watchfulneſs,[d] placability,[e] confidence in God,[f] the value of ſpiritual, that is, of mental worſhip,[g] the neceſſity of moral obedience, and the directing of that obedience to the ſpirit and principle of the law, inſtead of ſeeking for evaſions in a technical conſtruction of its terms.[h]

If we extend our argument to other parts of the New Teſtament, we may offer, as amongſt the beſt and ſhorteſt rules of life, or, which is the ſame thing, deſcriptions of virtue, that have ever been delivered, the following paſſages:

"Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this; to viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the world."[i]

"Now the end of the commandment is, charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conſcience, and faith unfeigned."[k]

"For the grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent world."[l]

Enumerations of virtues and vices, and thoſe ſufficiently accurate, and unqueſtionably juſt, are given by St. Paul to his converts in three ſeveral epiſtles.[m]

The relative duties of huſbands and wives, of parents and children, of maſters and ſervants, of Chriſtian teachers and their flocks, of governors and their ſubjects, are ſet forth by the ſame writer,[n] not indeed with the copiouſneſs, the detail, or the diſtinctneſs, of a moraliſt, who ſhould, in theſe days, ſit down to write chapters upon the ſubject, but with the leading rules and principles in each; and, above all, with truth, and with authority.

Laſtly,

[a] Mark viii. 35. Mat. vi. 31—33. Luke xii. 16, 21—4, 5. [b] John xv. [c] Mat. v. 29. [d] Mark xiii. 37. Mat. xxiv. 42—xxv. 13. [e] Luke xvii. 4. Mat. xviii. 33. [f] Mat. v. 25—30. [g] John iv. 23, 24. [h] Mat. v. 11. [i] James i. 27. [k] 1 Tim. i. 5. [l] Tit. ii. 11, 12. [m] Gal. v. 19. Col. iii. 12. 1 Cor. xiii. [n] Eph. v. 32. vi. 1. vi. 5. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7. Rom. xiii.

Laſtly, the whole volume of the New Teſtament is replete with *piety;* with, what were almoſt unknown to heathen moraliſts, *devotional virtues*, the moſt profound veneration of the Deity, an habitual ſenſe of his bounty and protection, a firm confidence in the final reſult of his councils and diſpenſations, a diſpoſition to reſort, upon all occaſions, to his mercy, for the ſupply of human wants, for aſſiſtance in danger, for relief from pain, for the pardon of ſin.

## CHAP. III.

### *The Candour of the Writers of the New Teſtament.*

I MAKE this candour to conſiſt, in their putting down many paſſages, and noticing many circumſtances, which no writer whatever was likely to have forged; and which no writer would have choſen to appear in his book, who had been careful to preſent the ſtory in the moſt unexceptionable form, or who had thought himſelf at liberty to carve and mould the particulars of that ſtory, according to his choice, or according to his judgment of the effect.

A ſtrong and well-known example of the fairneſs of the evangeliſts, offers itſelf in their account of Chriſt's reſurrection, namely, in their unanimouſly ſtating, that, after he was riſen, he appeared to his diſciples alone. I do not mean, that they have uſed the excluſive word *alone;* but that all the inſtances which they have recorded of his appearance, are inſtances of appearance to his diſciples; that their reaſonings upon it, and alluſions to it, are confined to this ſuppoſition; and that, by one of them, Peter is made to ſay, "Him God raiſed up the third day, and ſhowed him openly, not to all the people, but to witneſſes choſen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the dead." The commoneſt

moneſt underſtanding muſt have perceived, that the hiſtory of the reſurrection would have come with more advantage, if they had related that Jeſus appeared, after he was riſen, to his foes as well as his friends, to the ſcribes and Phariſees, the Jewiſh council, and the Roman governor; or even if they had aſſerted the public appearance of Chriſt in general unqualified terms, without noticing, as they have done, the preſence of his diſciples upon each occaſion, and noticing it in ſuch a manner as to lead their readers to ſuppoſe that none but diſciples were preſent. They *could* have repreſented it one way as well as the other. And if their point had been, to have the religion believed, whether true or falſe; if they had fabricated the ſtory *ab initio*, or if they had been diſpoſed, either to have delivered their teſtimony as witneſſes, or to have worked up their materials and information as hiſtorians, in ſuch a manner as to render their narrative as ſpecious and unobjectionable as they could; in a word, if they had thought of any thing but of the truth of the caſe, as they underſtood and believed it; they would, in their account of Chriſt's ſeveral appearances after his reſurrection, at leaſt have omitted this reſtriction. At this diſtance of time, the account as we have it, is perhaps more credible than it would have been the other way; becauſe this manifeſtation of the hiſtorian's candour, is of more advantage to their teſtimony, than the difference in the circumſtances of the account would have been to the nature of the evidence. But this is an effect which the evangeliſts would not foreſee; and I think that it was by no means the caſe at the time when the books were compoſed.

Mr. Gibbon has argued for the genuineneſs of the Koran, from the confeſſions which it contains, to the apparent diſadvantage of the Mahometan cauſe.[a] The ſame defence vindicates the genuineneſs of our goſpels, and without prejudice to the cauſe at all.

 There

[a] Vol. IX. c. 50. note 96.

There are ſome other inſtances in which the evangeliſts honeſtly relate what, they muſt have perceived, would make againſt them.

Of this kind is John the Baptiſt's meſſage preſerved by St. Matthew and St. Luke. (xi. 2, 3. vii. 19) "Now when John had heard, in the priſon, the works of Chriſt, he ſent two of his diſciples, and ſaid unto him, Art thou he that ſhould come, or look we for another?" To confeſs, ſtill more to ſtate, that John the Baptiſt had his doubts concerning the character of Jeſus, could not but afford a handle to cavil and objection. But truth, like honeſty, neglects appearances. The ſame obſervation, perhaps, holds concerning the apoſtacy of Judas.[a]

John vi. 66. "From that time many of his diſciples went back, and walked no more with him." Was it the part of a writer, who dealt in ſuppreſſion and diſguiſe, to put down *this* anecdote?

Or this, which Matthew has preſerved, (xiii. 58) "he did not many mighty works there, becauſe of their unbelief."

Again, in the ſame evangeliſt, (ver. 17, 18) "Think not that I am come to deſtroy the law or the prophets; I am

[a] I had once placed amongſt theſe examples of fair conceſſion, the remarkable words of St. Matthew, in his account of Chriſt's appearance upon the Galilean mountain; "and when they ſaw him, they worſhipped him, *but ſome doubted*." * I have ſince, however, been convinced, by what is obſerved concerning this paſſage † in Dr. Townſend's diſcourſe upon the reſurrection, that the tranſaction, as related by St. Matthew, was really this: "Chriſt appeared firſt at a diſtance; the greater part of the company, the moment they ſaw him, worſhipped; but ſome, as yet, i. e. upon this firſt diſtant view of his perſon, doubted; whereupon Chriſt *came up* ‡ to them, and ſpake to them," &c.: that the doubt, therefore, was a doubt only at firſt, for a moment, and upon his being ſeen at a diſtance, and was afterwards diſpelled by his nearer approach, and by his entering into converſation with them.

* *xxviii.* 17. † *Page* 177.

‡ St. Matthew's words are, Και προσελθων ο Ιησους ελαλησεν αυτοις. This intimates, that when he firſt appeared, it was at a diſtance, at leaſt from many of the ſpectators. (Ib. p. 197)

I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil; for, verily, I ſay unto you, till heaven and earth paſs, one jot, or one tittle, ſhall in no wiſe paſs from the law, till all be fulfilled." At the time the goſpels were written, the apparent tendency of Chriſt's miſſion was to diminiſh the authority of the Moſaic code, and it was ſo conſidered by the Jews themſelves. It is very improbable, therefore, that, without the conſtraint of truth, Matthew ſhould have aſcribed a ſaying to Chriſt, which, *primo intuitu*, militated with the judgment of the age in which his goſpel was written. Marcion thought this text ſo objectionable, that he altered the words ſo as to invert the ſenſe.[a]

Once more, Acts xxv. 19. "They brought none accuſation againſt him, of ſuch things, as I ſuppoſed, but had certain queſtions againſt him of their own ſuperſtition, and of one Jeſus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Nothing could be more in the character of a Roman governor than theſe words. But that is not preciſely the point I am concerned with. A mere panegyriſt, or a diſhoneſt narrator, would not have repreſented his cauſe or have made a great magiſtrate repreſent it, in this manner, i. e. in terms not a little diſparaging, and beſpeaking, on his part, much unconcern and indifference about the matter. The ſame obſervation may be repeated of the ſpeech which is aſcribed to Gallio. (Acts viii. 14) "If it be a queſtion of words, and names, and of your law, look ye to it, for I will be no judge of ſuch matters."

Laſtly, where do we diſcern a ſtronger mark of candour, or leſs diſpoſition to extol and magnify, than in the concluſion of the ſame hiſtory? in which the evangeliſt, after relating that Paul, upon his firſt arrival at Rome, preached to the Jews from morning until evening, adds, "and ſome believed the things which were ſpoken, and ſome believed not."

The following, I think, are paſſages, which were very unlikely to have preſented themſelves to the mind of a forger or a fabuliſt.

Mat.

[a] Lard. vol. XV. p. 422.

Mat. xxi. 21. "Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto them Verily I ſay unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye ſhall not only do this, which is done unto the fig-tree, but alſo, if ye ſhall ſay unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou caſt into the ſea, it ſhall be done; all things whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in prayer, believing, it ſhall be done."[a] It appears to me very improbable, that theſe words ſhould have been put into Chriſt's mouth, if he had not actually ſpoken them. The term "faith," as here uſed, is perhaps rightly interpreted of confidence in that internal notice, by which the apoſtles were admoniſhed of their power to perform any particular miracle. And this expoſition renders the ſenſe of the text more eaſy. But the words, undoubtedly, in their obvious conſtruction, carry with them a difficulty, which no writer would have brought upon himſelf officiouſly.

Luke ix. 59. "And he ſaid unto another, Follow me; but he ſaid, Lord, ſuffer me, firſt, to go and bury my father. Jeſus ſaid unto him, Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."[b] This anſwer, though very expreſſive of the tranſcendent importance of religious concerns, was apparently harſh and repulſive; and ſuch as would not have been made for Chriſt, if he had not really uſed it. At leaſt, ſome other inſtance would have been choſen.

The following paſſage, I, for the ſame reaſon, think impoſſible to have been the production of artifice, or of a cold forgery:—"But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever is angry with his brother, without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment; and whoſoever ſhall ſay to his brother, Raca, ſhall be in danger of the council; but whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou fool, ſhall be in danger of hell-fire (Gehennæ)." Mat. v. 22. It is emphatic, cogent, and well calculated for the purpoſe of impreſſion, but inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of art or warineſs on the part of the relator.

The

[a] See alſo xvii, 20. Luke xvii 6. [b] See alſo Mat. viii, 21.

The ſhort reply of our Lord to Mary Magdalen after his reſurrection, (John xx. 16, 17) "Touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended unto my Father," in my opinion, muſt have been founded in a reference or alluſion to ſome prior converſation, for the want of knowing which, his meaning is hidden from us. This very obſcurity, however, is a proof of genuineneſs. No one would have forged ſuch an anſwer.

John vi. The whole of the converſation, recorded in this chapter, is, in the higheſt degree, unlikely to be fabricated, eſpecially the part of our Saviour's reply between the fiftieth and the fifty-eighth verſe. I need only put down the firſt ſentence, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread, he ſhall live forever; and the bread that I will give him is my fleſh, which I will give for the life of the world." Without calling in queſtion the expoſitions that have been given of this paſſage, we may be permitted to ſay, that it labours under an obſcurity, in which it is impoſſible to believe that any one, who made ſpeeches for the perſons of his narrative, would have voluntarily involved them. That this diſcourſe was obſcure even at the time, is confeſſed by the writer who has preſerved it, when he tells us at the concluſion, that many of our Lord's diſciples, when they had heard this, ſaid, "This is a hard ſaying, who can hear it?"

Chriſt's taking of a young child, and placing it in the midſt of his contentious diſciples, (Mat. xviii. 2) though as deciſive a proof, as any could be, of the benignity of his temper, and very expreſſive of the character of the religion which he wiſhed to inculcate, was not by any means an obvious thought. Nor am I acquainted with any thing in any ancient writing which reſembles it.

The account of the inſtitution of the Euchariſt bears ſtrong internal marks of genuineneſs. If it had been feigned, it would have been more full. It would have come nearer to the actual mode of celebrating the rite, as that mode obtained very early in Chriſtian churches; and it would

would have been more formal than it is. In the forged piece, called the apoſtolic conſtitutions, the apoſtles are made to enjoin many parts of the ritual, which was in uſe in the ſecond and third centuries, with as much particularity, as a modern rubric could have done. Whereas, in the hiſtory of the Lord's ſupper, as we read it in St. Matthew's goſpel, there is not ſo much as the command to repeat it. This, ſurely, looks like undeſignedneſs. I think alſo that the difficulty, ariſing from the conciſeneſs of Chriſt's expreſſion, "This is my body," would have been avoided in a made-up ſtory. I allow that the explication of theſe words, given by Proteſtants, is ſatisfactory; but it is deduced from a diligent compariſon of the words in queſtion, with forms of expreſſion uſed in ſcripture, and eſpecially by Chriſt, upon other occaſions. No writer would, arbitrarily and unneceſſarily, have thus caſt in his reader's way a difficulty, which, to ſay the leaſt, it required reſearch and erudition to clear up.

Now it ought to be obſerved, that the argument which is built upon theſe examples, extends both to the authenticity of the books, and to the truth of the narrative; for it is improbable, that the forger of a hiſtory in the name of another ſhould inſert ſuch paſſages into it; and it is improbable alſo, that the perſons whoſe names the books bear, ſhould fabricate ſuch paſſages; or even allow them a place in their work, if they had not believed them to expreſs the truth.

The following obſervation, therefore, of Dr. Lardner, the moſt candid of all advocates, and the moſt cautious of all inquirers, ſeems to be well founded:—"Chriſtians are induced to believe the writers of the goſpel, by obſerving the evidences of piety and probity that appear in their writings, in which there is no deceit or artifice, or cunning, or deſign." "No remarks," as Dr. Beattie hath properly ſaid, "are thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution, which never fails to diſtinguiſh the teſtimony of thoſe, who are conſcious of impoſture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative." I beg

I beg leave to cite alſo another author,[a] who has well expreſſed the reflection, which the examples now brought forward were intended to ſuggeſt. "It doth not appear that ever it came into the mind of theſe writers, to conſider how this or the other action would appear to mankind, or what objections might be raiſed upon them. But, without at all attending to this, they lay the facts before you, at no pains to think whether they would appear credible or not. If the reader will not believe their teſtimony, there is no help for it: they tell the truth, and attend to nothing elſe. Surely this looks like ſincerity, and that they publiſhed nothing to the world but what they believed themſelves."

As no improper ſupplement to this chapter, I crave a place here for obſerving the extreme *naturalneſs* of ſome of the things related in the New Teſtament.

Mark ix. 23, 24. Jeſus ſaid unto him, "If thou canſt believe, all things are poſſible to him that believeth. And ſtraightway the father of the child cried out, and ſaid with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." The ſtruggle in the father's heart, between ſolicitude for the preſervation of his child, and a kind of involuntary diſtruſt of Chriſt's power to heal him, is here expreſſed with an air of reality, which could hardly be counterfeited.

Again, (Mat. xxi. 9) the eagerneſs of the people to introduce Chriſt into Jeruſalem, and their demand, a ſhort time afterwards, of his crucifixion, when he did not turn out what they expected him to be, ſo far from affording matter of objection, repreſents popular favour, in exact agreement with nature and with experience, as the flux and reflux of a wave.

The rulers and Phariſees rejecting Chriſt, whilſt many of the common people received him, was the effect which, in the then ſtate of Jewiſh prejudices, I ſhould have expected. And the reaſon with which they who rejected Chriſt's miſſion kept themſelves in countenance, and with which

[a] Duchal, p. 97, 98.

which alſo they anſwered the arguments of thoſe who favoured it, is preciſely the reaſon which ſuch men uſually give :—" Have any of the ſcribes or Phariſees believed on him." John vii. 8.

In our Lord's converſation at the well, (John iv. 29) Chriſt had ſurpriſed the Samaritan woman, with an alluſion to a ſingle particular in her domeſtic ſituation, " Thou haſt had five huſbands, and he, whom thou now haſt, is not thy huſband." The woman, ſoon after this, ran back to the city, and called out to her neighbours, " Come, ſee a man which told me *all things* that ever I did." This exaggeration appears to me very natural ; eſpecially in the hurried ſtate of ſpirits into which the woman may be ſuppoſed to have been thrown.

The lawyer's ſubtlety in running a diſtinction upon the word neighbour, in the precept " Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf," was no leſs natural than our Saviour's anſwer was deciſive and ſatisfactory. (Luke x. 29) The lawyer of the New Teſtament, it muſt be obſerved, was a Jewiſh divine.

The behaviour of Gallio, Acts xviii. 12—17, and of Feſtus, xxv. 18, 19, have been obſerved upon already.

The conſiſtency of St. Paul's character throughout the whole of his hiſtory ; the warmth and activity of his zeal, firſt againſt, and then for Chriſtianity, carries with it very much of the appearance of truth.

There are alſo ſome *proprieties*, as they may be called, obſervable in the goſpels, that is, circumſtances ſeparately ſuiting with the ſituation, character, and intention of their reſpective authors.

St. Matthew, who was an inhabitant of Galilee, and did not join Chriſt's ſociety until ſome time after Chriſt had come into Galilee to preach, has given us very little of his hiſtory prior to that period. St. John, who had been converted before, and who wrote to ſupply omiſſions in the other goſpels, relates ſome remarkable particulars, which

which had taken place before Chriſt left Judea to go into Galilee.[a]

St. Matthew (xv. 1) has recorded the cavil of the Phariſees againſt the diſciples of Jeſus for eating "with unclean hands." St. Mark has alſo (vii. 1) recorded the ſame tranſaction, (taken probably from St. Matthew) but with this addition, "for the Phariſees, and all the Jews, except they waſh their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders: and when they come from the market, except they waſh they eat not; and many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the waſhing of cups and pots, brazen veſſels, and of tables." Now St. Matthew was not only a Jew himſelf, but it is evident, from the whole ſtructure of his goſpel, eſpecially from his numerous references to the Old Teſtament, that he wrote for Jewiſh readers. The above explanation therefore in him would have been unnatural, as not being wanted by the readers whom he addreſſed. But in Mark, who, whatever uſe he might make of Matthew's goſpel, intended his own narrative for the general circulation, and who himſelf travelled to diſtant countries in the ſervice of the religion, it was properly added.

[a] Hartley's Obſ. vol. II. p. 103.

## CHAP. IV.

### *Identity of Chriſt's Character.*

THE argument expreſſed by this title I apply principally to the compariſon of the three firſt goſpels with that of St. John. It is known to every reader of ſcripture, that the paſſages of Chriſt's hiſtory preſerved by St. John, are, except his paſſion and reſurrection, for the moſt part different from thoſe which are delivered by the other evangeliſts. And I think the ancient account of this differ-

ence to be the true one, viz. that St. John wrote after the reſt, and to ſupply what he thought omiſſions in their narratives, of which the principal were our Saviour's conferences with the Jews of Jeruſalem, and his diſcourſes to his apoſtles at his laſt ſupper. But what I obſerve in the compariſon of theſe ſeveral accounts is, that, although actions and diſcourſes are aſcribed to Chriſt by St. John, in general different from what are given to him by the other evangeliſts, yet, under this diverſity, there is a ſimilitude of *manner*, which indicates that the actions and diſcourſes proceeded from the ſame perſon. I ſhould have laid little ſtreſs upon a repetition of actions ſubſtantially alike, or of diſcourſes containing many of the ſame expreſſions, becauſe that is a ſpecies of reſemblance, which would either belong to a true hiſtory, or might eaſily be imitated in a falſe one. Nor do I deny, that a dramatic writer is able to ſuſtain propriety and diſtinction of character, through a great variety of ſeparate incidents and ſituations. But the evangeliſts were not dramatic writers; nor poſſeſſed the talents of dramatic writers; nor will it, I believe, be ſuſpected, that they *ſtudied* uniformity of character, or ever thought of any ſuch thing, in the perſon who was the ſubject of their hiſtories. Such uniformity, if it exiſt, is on their part caſual; and if there be, as I contend there is, a perceptible reſemblance of *manner*, in paſſages, and between diſcourſes, which are in themſelves extremely diſtinct, and are delivered by hiſtorians writing without any imitation of, or reference to one another, it affords a juſt preſumption, that theſe are, what they profeſs to be, the actions and the diſcourſes of the ſame real perſon; that the evangeliſts wrote from fact, and not from imagination. The article in which I find this agreement moſt ſtrong, is in our Saviour's mode of teaching, and in that particular property of it, which conſiſts in his drawing of his doctrine from the occaſion; or, which is nearly the ſame thing, raiſing reflections from the objects and incidents before him, or turning a particular

diſcourſe

diſcourſe then paſſing into an opportunity of general inſtruction.

It will be my buſineſs to point out this *manner* in the three firſt evangeliſts; and then to inquire, whether it do not appear alſo, in ſeveral examples of Chriſt's diſcourſes, preſerved by St. John.

The reader will obſerve in the following quotation, that the italic letter contains the reflection, the common letter the incident or occaſion from which it ſprings.

Mat. xii. 49, 50. "Then they ſaid unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren ſtand without, deſiring to ſpeak with thee. But he anſwered, and ſaid unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he ſtretched forth his hands towards his diſciples, and ſaid, Behold my mother and my brethren; *for whoſoever ſhall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the ſame is my brother, and ſiſter, and mother.*"

Mat. xvi. 5. "And when his diſciples were come to the other ſide, they had forgotten to take bread; then Jeſus ſaid unto them, *Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Phariſees, and of the ſadducees.* And they reaſoned among themſelves, ſaying, It is becauſe we have taken no bread.—How is it that ye do not underſtand, that I ſpake it not to you concerning bread, that ye ſhould beware of the leaven of the Phariſees, and of the ſadducees? Then underſtood they *how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the* DOCTRINE *of the Phariſees and of the ſadducees.*"

Mat. xv. 1, 2, 10, 11, 17—20. "Then came to Jeſus ſcribes and Phariſees, which were of Jeruſalem, ſaying, Why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the elders? for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread.—And he called the multitude, and ſaid unto them, Hear and underſtand, *not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*—Then anſwered Peter, and ſaid unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jeſus ſaid, Are ye alſo yet without underſtanding? Do ye not yet underſtand,

ſtand, that whatſoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is caſt out into the draught? but thoſe things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man; *for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, theſts, falſe witneſs, blaſphemies; theſe are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwaſhen hands defileth not a man.*" Our Saviour, upon this occaſion, expatiates rather more at large than uſual, and his diſcourſe alſo is more divided, but the concluding ſentence brings back the whole train of thought to the incident in the firſt verſe, viz. the objurgatory queſtion of the Phariſees, and renders it evident that the whole ſprung from that circumſtance.

Mark x. 13, 14, 15. "And they brought young children to him, that he ſhould touch them, and his diſciples rebuked thoſe that brought them; but when Jeſus ſaw it, he was much diſpleaſed, and ſaid unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, *for of ſuch is the kingdom of God: verily I ſay unto you, whoſoever ſhall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he ſhall not enter therein.*"

Mark i. 16, 17. "Now as he walked by the ſea of Galilee, he ſaw Simon and Andrew his brother caſting a net into the ſea, for they were fiſhers; and Jeſus ſaid unto them, *Come ye after me, and I will make you fiſhers of men.*"

Luke xi. 27. "And it came to paſs as he ſpake theſe things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice and ſaid unto him, Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou haſt ſucked; but he ſaid, *Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.*"

Luke xiii. 1—5. "There were preſent at that ſeaſon ſome that told him of the Galileans, whoſe blood Pilate had mingled with their ſacrifices; and Jeſus anſwering, ſaid unto them, *Suppoſe ye that theſe Galileans were ſinners above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things? I tell*

*I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*"

Luke xiv. 15. "And when one of them that ſat at meat with him, heard theſe things, he ſaid unto him, Bleſſed is he that ſhall eat bread in the kingdom of God. Then ſaid he unto him, *A certain man made a great ſupper, and bade many*," &c. The parable is rather too long for inſertion, but affords a ſtriking inſtance of Chriſt's *manner* of raiſing a diſcourſe from the occaſion. Obſerve alſo in the ſame chapter, two other examples of advice, drawn from the circumſtances of the entertainment, and the behaviour of the gueſts.

We will now ſee, how this *manner* diſcovers itſelf in St. *John*'s hiſtory of Chriſt.

John vi. 26. "And when they had found him on the other ſide of the ſea, they ſaid unto him, Rabbi, when cameſt thou hither? Jeſus anſwered them, and ſaid, Verily I ſay unto you, ye ſeek me not becauſe ye ſaw the miracles, but becauſe ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. *Labour not for the meat which periſheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlaſting life, which the Son of Man ſhall give unto you.*"

John iv. 12. "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himſelf, and his children, and his cattle? Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto her, (the woman of Samaria) Whoſoever drinketh of this water ſhall thirſt again, but *whoſoever drinketh of the water that I ſhall give him, ſhall never thirſt; but the water that I ſhall give him, ſhall be in him a well of water, ſpringing up into everlaſting life.*"

John iv. 31. "In the mean while, his diſciples prayed him, ſaying, Maſter, eat; but he ſaid unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore ſaid the diſciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jeſus ſaith unto them, *My meat is, to do the will of him that ſent me, and to finiſh his work.*"

John ix. 1—5. "And as Jeſus paſſed by, he ſaw a man which was blind from his birth: and his diſciples aſk-

ed him, ſaying, Who did ſin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Jeſus anſwered, Neither hath this man ſinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God ſhould be made manifeſt in him. *I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"

John ix. 35—40. "Jeſus heard that they had caſt him (the blind man above-mentioned) out; and when he had found him, he ſaid unto him, Doſt thou believe on the Son of God? And he anſwered and ſaid, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jeſus ſaid unto him, Thou haſt both ſeen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he ſaid, Lord, I believe, and he worſhipped him. And Jeſus ſaid, *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which ſee not might ſee, and that they which ſee might be made blind.*"

All that the reader has now to do, is to compare the ſeries of examples taken from St. John, with the ſeries of examples taken from the other evangeliſts, and to judge whether there be not a viſible agreement of *manner* between them. In the above quoted paſſages, the occaſion is ſtated, as well as the reflection. They ſeem therefore the moſt proper for the purpoſe of our argument. A large, however, and curious collection has been made by different writers,[a] of inſtances, in which it is extremely probable, that Chriſt ſpoke in alluſion to ſome object, or ſome occaſion then before him, though the mention of the occaſion, or of the object, be omitted in the hiſtory. I only obſerve that theſe inſtances are common to St. John's goſpel with the other three.

I conclude this article by remarking, that nothing of this *manner* is perceptible in the ſpeeches recorded in the Acts, or in any other but thoſe which are attributed to Chriſt, and that, in truth, it was a very unlikely manner for a forger or fabuliſt to attempt; and a manner very difficult

[a] Newton on Dan. p. 148. note *a*. Jortin Diſ. p. 213. Biſhop Law's Life of Chriſt.

difficult for any writer to execute, if he had to ſupply all the materials, both the incidents, and the obſervations upon them, out of his own head. A forger or a fabuliſt would have made for Chriſt, diſcourſes exhorting to virtue and diſſuading from vice in general terms. It would never have entered into the thoughts of either, to have crowded together ſuch a number of alluſions, to time, place, and other little circumſtances, as occur, for inſtance, in the ſermon on the mount, and which nothing but the actual preſence of the objects could have ſuggeſted.[a]

II. There appears to me to exiſt an affinity between the hiſtory of Chriſt's placing a little child in the midſt of his diſciples, as related by the three firſt evangeliſts,[b] and the hiſtory of Chriſt's waſhing his diſciples feet, as given by St. John.[c] In the ſtories themſelves there is no reſemblance. But the affinity, which I would point out, conſiſts in theſe two articles; firſt, that both ſtories denote the emulation which prevailed amongſt Chriſt's diſciples, and his own care and deſire to correct it. The moral of both is the ſame. Secondly, that both ſtories are ſpecimens of the ſame manner of teaching, viz. by action; a mode of emblematic inſtruction extremely peculiar, and, in theſe paſſages, aſcribed, we ſee, to our Saviour, by the three firſt evangeliſts and by St. John, in inſtances totally unlike, and without the ſmalleſt ſuſpicion of their borrowing from each other.

III. A ſingularity in Chriſt's language, which runs through all the evangeliſts, and which is found in thoſe diſcourſes of St. John, that have nothing ſimilar to them in the other goſpels, is the appellation of "the Son of Man;" and it is in all the evangeliſts found under the peculiar circumſtance of being applied by Chriſt to himſelf, but of never being uſed of him, or towards him, by any other perſon. It occurs ſeventeen times in Matthew's goſpel, twelve times in Mark's, twenty-one times in Luke's, and

[a] See Biſhop Law's Life of Chriſt.

[b] Mat. xviii. 1. Mark ix. 33. Luke ix. 46.

[c] xiii. 3.

and eleven times in John's, and always with this reſtriction.

IV. A point of agreement in the conduct of Chriſt, as repreſented by his different hiſtorians, is that of his withdrawing himſelf out of the way, whenever the behaviour of the multitude indicated a diſpoſition to tumult.

Mat. xiv. 22. "And ſtraightway Jeſus conſtrained his diſciples to get into a ſhip, and to go before him unto the other ſide, while he ſent the multitude away. And when he had ſent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray."

Luke v. 15, 16. "But ſo much the more went there a fame abroad of him, and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities: and he withdrew himſelf into the wilderneſs and prayed."

With theſe quotations compare the following from St. John.

Chap. v. 13. "And he that was healed wiſt not who it was, for Jeſus had conveyed himſelf away, a multitude being in that place."

Chap. vi. 15. "When Jeſus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain by himſelf alone."

In this laſt inſtance St. John gives the motive of Chriſt's conduct, which is left unexplained by the other evangeliſts, who have related the conduct itſelf.

V. Another, and a more ſingular circumſtance in Chriſt's miniſtry, was the reſerve, which, for ſome time, and upon ſome occaſions at leaſt, he uſed in declaring his own character, and his leaving it to be collected from his works rather than his profeſſions. Juſt reaſons for this reſerve have been aſſigned.[a] But it is not what one would have expected. We meet with it in Matthew's goſpel (xvi. 20) "Then charged he his diſciples that they ſhould tell no man that he was Jeſus the Chriſt." Again, and upon a different

[a] See Locke's Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity.

different occaſion, in Mark's, (iii. 4) "And unclean ſpirits, when they ſaw him, fell down before him, and cried, ſaying, Thou art the Son of God; and he ſtraitly charged them that they ſhould not make him known." Another inſtance ſimilar to this laſt is recorded by St. Luke (iv. 41) What we thus find in the three evangeliſts, appears alſo in a paſſage of St. John (x. 24, 25) "Then came the Jews round about him, and ſaid unto him, How long doſt thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly." The occaſion here was different from any of the reſt; and it was indirect. We only diſcover Chriſt's conduct through the upbraidings of his adverſaries. But all this ſtrengthens the argument. I had rather at any time ſurpriſe a coincidence in ſome oblique alluſion, than read it in broad aſſertions.

VI. In our Lord's commerce with his diſciples, one very obſervable particular, is the difficulty which they found in underſtanding him, when he ſpoke to them of the future part of his hiſtory, eſpecially of what related to his paſſion or reſurrection. This difficulty produced, as was natural, a wiſh in them to aſk for further explanation; from which, however, they appear to have been ſometimes kept back, by the fear of giving offence. All theſe circumſtances are diſtinctly noticed by Mark and Luke, upon the occaſion of his informing them (probably for the firſt time) that the Son of Man ſhould be delivered into the hands of men. "They underſtood not," the evangeliſts tell us, "this ſaying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not; and they feared to aſk him of that ſaying" (Luke ix. 45. Mark ix. 32) In St. John's goſpel we have, upon a different occaſion and in a different inſtance, the ſame difficulty of apprehenſion, the ſame curioſity, and the ſame reſtraint:—"A little while, and ye ſhall not ſee me: and again a little while, and ye ſhall ſee me; becauſe I go to the Father. Then ſaid ſome of his diſciples among themſelves, What is this that he ſaith unto us? A little while and ye ſhall not ſee me: and again a little while, and ye ſhall ſee me; and, Becauſe I go to the Father?

They

They ſaid, therefore, What is this that he ſaith, A little while? We cannot tell what he ſaith. Now Jeſus knew that they were deſirous to aſk him, and ſaid unto them," &c. John xvi. 16. et ſeq.

VII. The meekneſs of Chriſt during his laſt ſufferings, which is conſpicuous in the narratives of the three firſt evangeliſts, is preſerved in that of St. John under ſeparate examples. The anſwer given by him, in St. John,[a] when the high-prieſt aſked him of his diſciples and his doctrine, "I ſpake openly to the world, I ever taught in the ſynagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always reſort, and in ſecret have I ſaid nothing; why aſkeſt thou me? Aſk them which heard me what I have ſaid unto them;" is very much of a piece with his reply to the armed party which ſeized him, as we read it in St. Mark's goſpel, and in St. Luke's:[b] "Are ye come out as againſt a thief with ſwords and with ſtaves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not." In both anſwers we diſcern the ſame tranquillity, the ſame reference to his public teaching. His mild expoſtulation with Pilate upon two ſeveral occaſions, as related by St. John,[c] is delivered with the ſame unruffled temper, as that which conducted him through the laſt ſcene of his life, as deſcribed by his other evangeliſts. His anſwer, in St. John's goſpel, to the officer who ſtruck him with the palm of his hand, "If I have ſpoken evil, bear witneſs of the evil, but if well, why ſmiteſt thou me?"[d] was ſuch an anſwer, as might have been looked for from the perſon, who, as he proceeded to the place of execution, bid his companions (as we are told by St. Luke[e]) weep not for him, but for themſelves, their poſterity, and their country; and who prayed for his murderers, whilſt he was ſuſpended upon the croſs, "For they know not (ſaid he) what they do." The urgency alſo of his judges and his proſecutors to extort from him a defence to the accuſation, and his unwillingneſs to make any (which was a peculiar circumſtance) appears

[a] xviii. 20. [b] Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52.
[c] xviii. 34. xix. 11. [d] xxviii. 23. [e] xxiii. 28.

appears in St. John's account, as well as in that of the other evangeliſts.[a]

There are moreover two other correſpondencies between St. John's hiſtory of the tranſaction and theirs, of a kind ſomewhat different from thoſe which we have been now mentioning.

The three firſt evangeliſts record, what is called our Saviour's agony, i. e. his devotion in the garden, immediately before he was apprehended; in which narrative they all make him pray, "that the cup might paſs from him." This is the particular metaphor which they all aſcribe to him. St. Matthew adds, "O my Father, if this cup may not paſs away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."[b] Now St. John does not give the ſcene in the garden; but when Jeſus was ſeized, and ſome reſiſtance was attempted to be made by Peter, Jeſus, according to his account, checked the attempt with this reply: "Put up thy ſword into the ſheath; the cup, which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?"[c] This is ſomething more than bare conſiſtency; it is coincidence: becauſe it is extremely natural, that Jeſus, who, before he was apprehended, had been praying his Father, that "that cup might paſs from him," yet with ſuch a pious retraction of his requeſt, as to have added, "If this cup may not paſs from me, thy will be done;" it was natural, I ſay, for the ſame perſon, when he actually was apprehended, to expreſs the reſignation to which he had already made up his thoughts, and to expreſs it in the form of ſpeech which he had before uſed, "The cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?" This is a coincidence between writers, in whoſe narratives there is no imitation, but great diverſity.

A ſecond ſimilar correſpondency is the following: Matthew and Mark make the charge, upon which our Lord was condemned, to be a threat of deſtroying the temple; "We heard him ſay, I will deſtroy this temple, made

[a] See John xix. 9. Mat. xxvii. 14. Luke xxiii. 9.
[b] xxvi. 42. [c] xviii. 11.

made with hands, and, within three days, I will build another made without hands;"[a] but they neither of them inform us, upon what circumſtance this calumny was founded. St. John, in the early part of his hiſtory,[b] ſupplies us with this information; for he relates, that, upon our Lord's firſt journey to Jeruſalem, when the Jews aſked him, "What ſign ſheweſt thou unto us, ſeeing that thou doeſt theſe things? He anſwered, Deſtroy this temple, and in three days I will raiſe it up." This agreement could hardly ariſe from any thing but the truth of the caſe. From any care or deſign in St. John, to make his narrative tally with the narratives of the other evangeliſts, it certainly did not ariſe, for no ſuch deſign appears, but the abſence of it.

A ſtrong, and more general inſtance of agreement, is the following. The three firſt evangeliſts have related the appointment of the twelve apoſtles;[c] and have given a catalogue of their names in form. John, without ever mentioning the appointment, or giving the catalogue, ſuppoſes, throughout his whole narrative, Chriſt to be accompanied by a ſelect party of diſciples; the number of theſe to be twelve;[d] and, whenever he happens to notice any one as of that number,[e] it is one included in the catalogue of the other evangeliſts; and the names principally occurring in the courſe of *his* hiſtory of Chriſt, are the names extant in their liſt. This laſt agreement, which is of conſiderable moment, runs through every goſpel, and through every chapter of each.

All this beſpeaks reality.

[a] Mark xiv. 5. [b] ii. 19.
[c] Mat. x. 1. Mark iii. 14. Luke vi. 12.
[d] vi. 7. [e] xx. 24. vi. 71.

## CHAP. V.

### *Originality of our Saviour's Character.*

THE Jews, whether right or wrong, had underſtood their prophecies to foretel the advent of a perſon, who, by ſome ſupernatural aſſiſtance, ſhould advance their nation to independence, and to a ſupreme degree of ſplendour and proſperity. This was the reigning opinion and expectation of the times.

Now, had Jeſus been an enthuſiaſt, it is probable that his enthuſiaſm would have fallen in with the popular deluſion, and that, whilſt he gave himſelf out to be the perſon intended by theſe predictions, he would have aſſumed the character, to which they were univerſally ſuppoſed to relate.

Had he been an impoſtor, it was his buſineſs to have flattered the prevailing hopes, becauſe theſe hopes were to be the inſtruments of his attraction and ſucceſs.

But what is better than conjectures, is the fact, that all the pretended Meſſiahs actually did ſo. We learn from Joſephus that there were many of theſe. Some of them, it is probable, might be impoſtors, who thought that an advantage was to be taken of the ſtate of public opinion. Others, perhaps, were enthuſiaſts, whoſe imagination had been drawn to this particular object, by the language and ſentiments which prevailed around them. But, whether impoſtors or enthuſiaſts, they concurred in producing themſelves in the character which their countrymen looked for, that is to ſay, as the reſtorers and deliverers of the nation, in that ſenſe in which reſtoration and deliverance were expected by the Jews.

Why therefore Jeſus, if he was, like them, either an enthuſiaſt or impoſtor, did not purſue the ſame conduct as they did, in framing his character and pretenſions, it will be found difficult to explain. A miſſion, the operation and benefit of which was to take place in another life,

was a thing unthought of as the ſubject of theſe prophecies. That Jeſus, coming to them as their Meſſiah, ſhould come under a character totally different from that in which they expected him; ſhould deviate from the general perſuaſion, and deviate into pretenſions abſolutely ſingular and original; appears to be inconſiſtent with the imputation of enthuſiaſm or impoſture, both which, by their nature, I ſhould expect, would, and both which, throughout the experience which this very ſubject furniſhes, in fact *have* followed, the opinions that obtained at the time.

If it be ſaid, that Jeſus, having tried the other plan, turned at length to this; I anſwer, that the thing is ſaid without evidence; againſt evidence; that it was competent to the reſt to have done the ſame, yet that nothing of this ſort was thought of by any.

## CHAP. VI.

ONE argument, which has been much relied upon, (but not more than its juſt weight deſerves) is the conformity of the facts, occaſionally mentioned or referred to in ſcripture, with the ſtate of things in thoſe times, as repreſented by foreign and independent accounts. Which conformity proves, that the writers of the New Teſtament poſſeſſed a ſpecies of local knowledge, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, and to one living in that age. This argument, if well made out by examples, is very little ſhort of proving the abſolute genuineneſs of the writings. It carries them up to the age of the reputed authors, to an age, in which it muſt have been difficult to impoſe upon the Chriſtian public forgeries in the names of thoſe authors, and in which there is no evidence that any forgeries were attempted. It proves at leaſt, that the books, whoever were the authors of them, were compoſed by perſons living in the time and country in which theſe things were tranſacted, and conſequently capable, by their ſituation,

ſituation, of being well informed of the facts which they relate. And the argument is ſtronger, when applied to the New Teſtament, than it is in the caſe of almoſt any other writings, by reaſon of the mixed nature of the alluſions which this book contains. The ſcene of action is not confined to a ſingle country, but diſplayed in the greateſt cities of the Roman empire. Alluſions are made to the manners and principles of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews. This variety renders a forgery proportionably more difficult, eſpecially to writers of a poſterior age. A Greek or Roman Chriſtian, who lived in the ſecond or third century, would have been wanting in Jewiſh literature; a Jewiſh convert in thoſe ages would have been equally deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome.[a]

This, however, is an argument which depends entirely upon an induction of particulars; and as, conſequently, it carries with it little force, without a view of the inſtances upon which it is built, I have to requeſt the reader's attention to a detail of examples, diſtinctly and articulately propoſed. In collecting theſe examples, I have done no more than to epitomize the firſt volume of the firſt part of Dr. Lardner's credibility of the goſpel hiſtory. And I have brought the argument within its preſent compaſs, firſt, by paſſing over ſome of his ſections in which the accordancy appeared to me leſs certain, or upon ſubjects not ſufficiently appropriate or circumſtantial; ſecondly, by contracting every ſection into the feweſt words poſſible, contenting myſelf for the moſt part with a mere appoſition of paſſages; and, thirdly, by omitting many diſquiſitions, which, though learned and accurate, are not abſolutely neceſſary to the underſtanding or verification of the argument.

The writer, principally made uſe of in the inquiry, is Joſephus. Joſephus was born at Jeruſalem four years after Chriſt's aſcenſion. He wrote his hiſtory of the Jewiſh war ſome time after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which happened

[a] Michaelis's Introduction to the New Teſtament, (Marſh's tranſlation) c. ii. ſec. xi.

happened in the year of our Lord ſeventy, that is, thirty-ſeven years after the aſcenſion; and his hiſtory of the Jews he finiſhed in the year ninety-three, that is, ſixty years after the aſcenſion.

At the head of each article, I have referred, by figures included in brackets, to the page of Dr. Lardner's volume where the ſection, from which the abridgment is made, begins. The edition uſed is that of 1741.

I. (p. 14.) Mat. xi. 22. "When he (Joſeph) heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea, in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; notwithſtanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aſide into the parts of Galilee."

In this paſſage it is aſſerted, that Archelaus ſucceeded Herod in Judea; and it is implied, that his power did *not* extend to Galilee. Now we learn from Joſephus, that Herod the Great, whoſe dominion included all the land of Iſrael, appointed Archelaus his ſucceſſor in *Judea*, and aſſigned the *reſt* of his dominions to other ſons; and that this diſpoſition was ratified, as to the main parts of it, by the Roman emperor.[a]

St. Matthew ſays, that Archelaus *reigned*, was *king* in Judea. Agreeably to this, we are informed by Joſephus, not only that Herod appointed Archelaus his ſucceſſor in Judea, but that he alſo appointed him with the title of king; and the verb (βασιλευει) which the evangeliſt uſes to denote the government and rank of Archelaus, is uſed likewiſe by Joſephus.[b]

The cruelty of Archelaus's character, which is not obſcurely intimated by the evangeliſt, agrees with divers particulars in his hiſtory, preſerved by Joſephus. "In the tenth year of his government, the chief of the Jews and Samaritans, not being able to endure his cruelty and tyranny, preſented complaints againſt him to Cæſar."[c]

II. (p. 19) Luke iii. 1. "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæſar—Herod being tetrarch of Galilee and

[a] Ant. lib. 17. c. 8. ſec. 1. [b] De Bell. lib. 1. c. 33. ſec. 7.
[c] Ant. lib. 17. c. 13. ſec. 1.

and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis—the word of God came unto John."

By the will of Herod the Great, and the decree of Auguſtus thereupon, his two ſons were appointed, one (Herod Antipas) tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, and the other (Philip) tetrarch of Trachonitis and the neighbouring countries.[a] We have therefore theſe two perſons in the ſituations in which St. Luke places them; and alſo, that they were in theſe ſituations in the *fifteenth* year of Tiberius, in other words, that they continued in poſſeſſion of their territories and titles until that time, and afterwards, appears from a paſſage of Joſephus, which relates of Herod, "that he was *removed* by Caligula, the ſucceſſor of Tiberius;[b] and of Philip, that he died in the *twentieth* year of Tiberius, when he had governed Trachonitis and Batanea and Gaulanitis thirty-ſeven years.[c]

III. (p. 20) Mark v. 17.[d] "Herod had ſent forth, and laid hold upon John, and bound him in priſon, for Herodias's ſake, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her."

With this compare Joſ. Ant. l. 18. c. 6. ſec. 1. "He (Herod the tetrarch) made a viſit to Herod his brother—Here, falling in love with Herodias, the wife of the ſaid Herod, he ventured to make her propoſals of marriage."[e]

Again,

[a] Ant. lib. 17. c. 8. ſec. 1. [b] Ant. lib. 18. c. 8. ſec. 2.

[c] Ant. lib. 18. c. 5. ſec. 6.

[d] See alſo Mat. xiv. 1—13. Luke iii. 19.

[e] The affinity of the two accounts is unqueſtionable; but there is a difference in the name of Herodias's firſt huſband, which, in the evangeliſt, is Philip, in Joſephus, Herod. The difficulty, however, will not appear conſiderable, when we recollect how common it was, in thoſe times, for the ſame perſon to bear two names: "Simon, which is called Peter; Lebbeus, whoſe ſirname is Thaddeus; Thomas, which is called Didymus; Simeon, who was called Niger; Saul, who was alſo called Paul." The ſolution is rendered likewiſe eaſier in the preſent caſe, by the conſideration, that Herod the Great had children by ſeven or eight wives; that Joſephus

Again, Mark vi. 22. "And when the *daughter of the ſaid Herodias* came in and danced."

With this alſo compare Joſ. Ant. l. 18. c. 6. ſec. 4. "Herodias was married to Herod, ſon of Herod the Great. *They had a daughter*, whoſe name was Salome; after whoſe birth, Herodias, in utter violation of the laws of her country, left her huſband then living, and married Herod the tetrach of Galilee, her huſband's brother by the father's ſide."

IV. (p. 29) Acts xii. 1. "Now, about that time, *Herod the king* ſtretched forth his hands, to vex certain of the church." In the concluſion of the ſame chapter, Herod's *death* is repreſented to have taken place, ſoon after this perſecution. The accuracy of our hiſtorian, or, rather, the unmeditated coincidence, which truth of its own accord produces, is in this inſtance remarkable. There was no portion of time, for thirty years before, nor ever afterwards, in which there was a *king* at Jeruſalem, a perſon exerciſing that authority in Judea, or to whom that title could be applied, except the three laſt years of this Herod's life, within which period, the tranſaction recorded in the Acts is ſtated to have taken place. This prince was the grandſon of Herod the Great. In the Acts he appears under his family name of Herod; by Joſephus he is called Agrippa. For proof that he was a *king*, properly ſo called, we have the teſtimony of Joſephus in full and direct terms:—"Sending for him to his palace, Caligula put a crown upon his head, and appointed him king of the tetrarchie of Philip, intending alſo to give him the tetrarchie of Lyſanias."[a] And that Judea was at laſt, but not until the laſt, included in his dominions, appears by a ſubſequent paſſage of the ſame Joſephus, wherein he tells us, that Claudius by a decree confirmed to Agrippa the

Joſephus mentions three of his ſons under the name of Herod; that it is nevertheleſs highly probable, that the brothers bore ſome additional name, by which they were diſtinguiſhed from one another. Lard. vol. II. p. 897.

[a] Ant. xviii. c. vii. ſec. 10.

the dominion which Caligula had given him, *adding alſo Judea and Samaria, in the utmoſt extent, as poſſeſſed by his grandfather Herod.*[a]

V. (p. 32) Acts xii. 19, 23. "And he (Herod) went down from Judea to Cæſarea, and there abode. And upon a ſet day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, ſat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them; and the people gave a ſhout, ſaying, It is the voice of a god and not of a man; and immediately the angel of the Lord ſmote him, becauſe he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghoſt."

Joſ. Ant. lib. xix. c. 8. ſec. 2. "He went to the city Cæſarea. Here he celebrated ſhows in honour of Cæſar. On the ſecond day of the ſhows, early in the morning, he came into the theatre, dreſſed in a robe of ſilver, of moſt curious workmanſhip. The rays of the riſing ſun reflected from ſo ſplendid a garb, gave him a majeſtic and awful appearance. They called him a god, and entreated him to be propitious to them, ſaying, Hitherto we have reſpected you as a man, but now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal. The king neither reproved theſe perſons, nor rejected the impious flattery. Immediately after this, he was ſeized with pains in his bowels extremely violent at the very firſt. He was carried therefore with all haſte to his palace. Theſe pains continually tormenting him, he expired in five days time."

The reader will perceive the accordancy of theſe accounts in various particulars. The place, (Cæſarea) the ſet day, the gorgeous dreſs, the acclamations of the aſſembly, the peculiar turn of the flattery, the reception of it, the ſudden and critical incurſion of the diſeaſe, are circumſtances noticed in both narratives. The worms mentioned by St. Luke are not remarked by Joſephus, but the appearance of theſe is a ſymptom, not unuſually, I believe, attending the diſeaſe, which Joſephus deſcribes, viz. violent affections of the bowels.

VI.

[a] Ib. xix. c. v. ſec. 1.

VI. (p. 41) Acts xxiv. 24. "And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Druſilla, which was a Jeweſs, he ſent for Paul.

Joſ. Ant. lib. xx. c. 6. ſec. 1, 2. "Agrippa gave his ſiſter Druſilla in marriage to Azizus, king of the Emeſenes, when he had conſented to be circumciſed—But this marriage of Druſilla with Azizus was diſſolved in a ſhort time after in this manner: when *Felix was procurator of Judea*, having had a ſight of her, he was mightily taken with her—She was induced to tranſgreſs the laws of her country, and marry Felix."

Here the public ſtation of Felix, the name of his wife, and the ſingular circumſtance of her religion, all appear in perfect conformity with the evangeliſt.

VII. (p. 46) "And after certain days, king Agrippa and Bernice came to Cæſarea to ſalute Feſtus." By this paſſage we are in effect told, that Agrippa was a king, but not of Judea; for he came to ſalute Feſtus, who at this time adminiſtered the government of that country at Cæſarea.

Now how does the hiſtory of the age correſpond with this account? The Agrippa, here ſpoken of, was the ſon of Herod Agrippa, mentioned in the laſt article; but that he did not ſucceed to his father's kingdom, nor ever recovered Judea, which had been a part of it, we learn by the information of Joſephus, who relates of him, that, when his father was dead, Claudius intended, at firſt, to have put him immediately in poſſeſſion of his father's dominions; but that Agrippa being then but ſeventeen years of age, the emperor was perſuaded to alter his mind, and appointed Cuſpius Fadus prefect of Judea and the whole kingdom;[a] which Fadus was ſucceeded by Tiberius Alexander, Cumanus, Felix, Feſtus.[b] But that, though diſappointed of his father's kingdom, in which was included Judea, he was nevertheleſs rightly ſtyled *king* Agrippa; and that he was in poſſeſſion of conſiderable territories bordering upon Judea, we gather from the ſame authority; for after ſeveral

[a] Ant. xix. c. ix. ad fin. [b] Ib. xx. de Bell. lib. II.

ral ſucceſſive donations of country, "Claudius, at the ſame time that he ſent Felix to be procurator of Judea, promoted Agrippa from Chalcis to a greater *kingdom*, giving to him the tetrarchie which had been Philip's; and he added moreover the *kingdom* of Lyſanias, and the province that had belonged to Varus."[a]

St. Paul addreſſes this perſon as a Jew: "King Agrippa, believeſt thou the prophets? I know that thou believeſt." As the ſon of Herod Agrippa, who is deſcribed by Joſephus to have been a zealous Jew, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that he maintained the ſame profeſſion. But what is more material to remark, becauſe it is more cloſe and circumſtantial, is, that St. Luke, ſpeaking of the father, (xii. 1, 3) calls him Herod the king, and gives an example of the exerciſe of his authority at Jeruſalem; ſpeaking of the ſon, (xxv. 13) he calls him king, but not of Judea; which diſtinction agrees correctly with the hiſtory.

VIII. (p. 51) Acts xiii. 7. "And when they had gone through the iſle (Cyprus) to Paphos, they found a certain ſorcerer, a falſe prophet, a Jew, whoſe name was Barjeſus, which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man."

The word, which is here tranſlated deputy, ſignifies *proconſul*, and upon this word our obſervation is founded. The provinces of the Roman empire were of two kinds; thoſe belonging to the emperor, in which the governor was called proprætor; and thoſe belonging to the ſenate, in which the governor was called proconſul. And this was a regular diſtinction. Now it appears from Dio Caſſius,[b] that the province of Cyprus, which in the original diſtribution was aſſigned to the emperor, had been transferred to the ſenate, in exchange for ſome others; and that, after this exchange, the appropriate title of the Roman governor was proconſul.

Ib. xviii. 12 (p. 55) "And when Gallio was deputy *(proconſul)* of Achaia."

The

[a] De Bell. lib. II. c. xii. ad fin. [b] Lib. 54. ad A. U. 732.

The propriety of the title "proconſul" is in this paſſage ſtill more critical. For the province of Achaia, after paſſing from the ſenate to the emperor, had been reſtored again by the emperor Claudius to the ſenate (and conſequently its government had become proconſular) only ſix or ſeven years before the time in which this tranſaction is ſaid to have taken place.[a] And what confines with ſtrictneſs the appellation to the time is, that Achaia under the following reign ceaſed to be a Roman province at all.

IX. (p. 152) It appears, as well from the general conſtitution of a Roman province, as from what Joſephus delivers concerning the ſtate of Judea in particular,[b] that the power of life and death reſided excluſively in the Roman governor, but that the Jews, nevertheleſs, had magiſtrates and a council, inveſted with a ſubordinate and municipal authority. This economy is diſcerned in every part of the goſpel narrative of our Saviour's crucifixion.

X. (p. 203) Acts ix. 31. "Then had the churches reſt throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria."

This *reſt* ſynchroniſes with the attempt of Caligula to place his ſtatue in the temple of Jeruſalem; the threat of which outrage produced amongſt the Jews a conſternation, that, for a ſeaſon, diverted their attention from every other object.[c]

XI. (p. 218) Acts xxi. 31. "And they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple; and forthwith the doors were ſhut. And as they went out to kill him, tidings came to the chief captain of the *band*, that all Jeruſalem was in an uproar. Then the chief captain came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains, and demanded who he was, and what he had done; and ſome cried one thing, and ſome another, among the multitude: and, when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the *caſtle*. And when he came upon the *ſtairs*,

[a] Suet. in Claud. c. 25. Dio. lib. 61.
[b] Ant. lib. 20. c. 8. ſec. 5. c. 1. ſec. 2.
[c] Joſ. de Bell. lib. 11. c. 10. ſec. 1, 3, 4.

*ſtairs*, ſo it was, that he was borne of the ſoldiers for the violence of the people."

In this quotation, we have the band of Roman ſoldiers at Jeruſalem, their office, (to ſuppreſs tumults) the caſtle, the ſtairs, both, as it ſhould ſeem, adjoining to the temple. Let us inquire whether we can find theſe particulars in any other record of that age and place.

Joſ. de Bell. lib. 5. c. 5. ſec. 8. "Antonia was ſituated at the angle of the weſtern and northern porticoes of the outer temple. It was built upon a rock fifty cubits high, ſteep on all ſides.—On that ſide, where it joined to the porticoes of the temple, there were *ſtairs* reaching to each portico, by which the *guard* deſcended; for there was always lodged here *a Roman legion*, and poſting themſelves in their armour in ſeveral places in the porticoes, they kept a watch on the people on the feaſt days *to prevent all diſorders;* for as the temple was a guard to the city, ſo was Antonia to the temple."

XII. (p. 224) Acts iv. 1. "And as they ſpake unto the people, the prieſts, and *the captain of the temple*, and the ſadducees, came upon them." Here we have a public officer, under the title of captain of the temple, and he probably a Jew, as he accompanied the prieſts and ſadducees in apprehending the apoſtles.

Joſ. de Bell. lib. 2. c. 17. ſec. 2. "And at the *temple* Eleazar, the ſon of Ananias the high prieſt, a young man of a bold and reſolute diſpoſition, then *captain*, perſuaded thoſe who performed the ſacred miniſtrations, not to receive the gift or ſacrifice of any ſtranger."

XIII. (p. 225) Acts xxv. 12. "Then Feſtus, when he had conferred with the *council*, anſwered, Haſt thou appealed unto Cæſar? unto Cæſar ſhalt thou go." That it was uſual for the Roman preſidents to have a council, conſiſting of their friends, and other chief Romans in the province, appears expreſsly in the following paſſage of Cicero's oration againſt Verres:—"Illud negare poſſes, aut nunc negabis, te, concilio tuo dimiſſo, viris primariis, qui

qui in consilio C. Sacerdotis fuerant, tibique esse volebant, remotis, de rejudicatâ judicasse ?"

XIV. (p. 235) Acts xvi. 13. "And (at Philippi) on the Sabbath, we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made," or where a proseucha, oratory, or place of prayer, was allowed. The particularity to be remarked, is the situation of the place where prayer was wont to be made, viz. by a *river side*.

Philo, describing the conduct of the Jews of Alexandria upon a certain public occasion, relates of them, that, "early in the morning, flocking out of the gates of the city, they go to the *neighbouring shores*, (for the *proseuchæ* were destroyed) and standing in a most pure place, they lift up their voices with one accord."[a]

Josephus gives us a decree of the city of Halicarnassus, permitting the Jews to build oratories, a part of which decree runs thus:—"We ordain that the Jews, who are willing, men and women, do observe the Sabbaths, and perform sacred rites according to the Jewish laws, and *build oratories by the sea-side*."[b]

Tertullian, among other Jewish rites and customs, such as feasts, sabbaths, fasts, and unleavened bread, mentions orationes *litorales*, that is, prayers by the river side.[c]

XV. (p. 255) Acts xxvi. 5. "After the most *straitest* sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee."

Jos. de Bell. l. 1. c. 5. sec. 2. "The Pharisees were reckoned the most religious of any of the Jews, and to be the most *exact* and skilful in explaining the laws."

In the original there is an agreement, not only in the sense but in the expression, it being the same Greek adjective, which is rendered "strait" in the Acts, and "exact" in Josephus.

XVI. (p. 255) Mark viii. 3, 4. "The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders; and many other things there be which they have received to hold."

Jos.

[a] Philo in Flacc. p. 382. [b] Jos. Ant. lib. 14. c. 10. sec. 24.
[c] Tertull. ad Nat. lib. 1. c. 13.

Joſ. Ant. lib. 13. c. 10. ſec. 6. "The Phariſees have delivered to the people many inſtitutions, as received from the fathers, which are not written in the law of Moſes."

XVII. (p. 259) Acts xxiii. 8. "For the ſadducees ſay, that there is no reſurrection, neither angel nor ſpirit, but the Phariſees confeſs both."

Joſ. de Bell. lib. 2. c. 8. ſec. 14. "They (the Phariſees) believe every ſoul to be immortal, but that the ſoul of the good only paſſes into another body, and the ſoul of the wicked is puniſhed with eternal puniſhment." On the other hand, Ant. lib. 18. c. 1. ſec. 4. "It is the opinion of the ſadducees that ſouls periſh with the bodies."

XVIII. (p. 268) Acts v. 17. "Then the high-prieſt roſe up, and all they that were with him, which is the ſect of the ſadducees, and were filled with indignation." St. Luke here intimates that the high-prieſt was a ſadducee, which is a character one would not have expected to meet with in that ſtation. This circumſtance, remarkable as it is, was not however without examples.

Joſ. Ant. lib. 13. c. 10. ſec. 6, 7. "John Hyrcanus, high-prieſt of the Jews, forſook the Phariſees upon a diſguſt, and joined himſelf to the party of the ſadducees." This high-prieſt died one hundred and ſeven years before the Chriſtian era.

Again, (Ant. lib. 20. c. 8. ſec. 1) "This Ananus the younger, who, as we have ſaid juſt now, had received the high-prieſthood, was fierce and haughty in his behaviour, and above all men bold and daring; and moreover, *was of the ſect of the ſadducees.*" This high-prieſt lived little more than twenty years after the tranſaction in the Acts.

XIX. (p. 282) Luke ix. 51. "And it came to paſs, when the time was come, that he ſhould be received up, he ſtedfaſtly ſet his face to go to Jeruſalem, and ſent meſſengers before his face. And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him, and they did not receive him, becauſe his face was as though he would go to Jeruſalem."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 20. c. 5. ſec. 1. "It was the cuſtom of the Galileans, who went up to the holy city at the feaſts, to travel through the country of Samaria. As they were in their journey, ſome inhabitants of the village called Ginæa, which lies on the borders of Samaria and the great plain, falling upon them, killed a great many of them."

XX. (p. 278) John iv. 20. "Our fathers," ſaid the Samaritan woman, "worſhipped in *this mountain*, and ye ſay, that Jeruſalem is the place where men ought to worſhip."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 18. c. 5. ſec. 1. "Commanding them to meet him at *Mount Gerizim*, which is by them (the Samaritans) eſteemed the moſt ſacred of all mountains."

XXI. (p. 312) Mat. xxvi. 3. "Then aſſembled together the chief prieſts, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high-prieſt, *who was called Caiaphas*." That Caiaphas was high-prieſt, and high-prieſt throughout the preſidentſhip of Pontius Pilate, and conſequently at this time, appears from the following account:—He was made high-prieſt by Valerius Gratus, *predeceſſor* of Pontius Pilate, and was removed from his office by Vitellius, preſident of Syria, *after* Pilate was ſent away out of the province of Judea. Joſephus relates the *advancement* of Caiaphas to the high-prieſthood in this manner: "Gratus gave the high-prieſthood to Simon, the ſon of Camithus. He having enjoyed this honour not above a year, was ſucceeded by Joſeph, *who is alſo called Caiaphas*.[a] After this Gratus went away for Rome, having been eleven years in Judea; and *Pontius Pilate came thither as his ſucceſſor*." Of the *removal* of Caiaphas from his office, Joſephus likewiſe afterward informs us; and connects it with a circumſtance, which fixes the time to a date ſubſequent to the determination of Pilate's government. "Vitellius (he tells us) ordered *Pilate to repair to Rome*; and *after that* went up himſelf to Jeruſalem, and then gave directions concerning ſeveral matters. And, having done theſe things, he took away

[a] Ant. lib. 18. c. 2. ſec. 2.

away the prieſthood from *the high-prieſt* Joſeph, who is called *Caiaphas*."[a]

XXII. (Michaelis, c. 11. ſec. 11) Acts xxiii. 4. "And they that ſtood by ſaid, Revileſt thou God's high-prieſt? Then ſaid Paul, I wiſt not, brethren, that he was the high-prieſt." Now, upon inquiry into the hiſtory of the age, it turns out, that Ananias, of whom this is ſpoken, was, in truth, not the high-prieſt, though he was ſitting in judgment in that aſſumed capacity. The caſe was, that he had formerly held the office, and had been depoſed; that the perſon who ſucceeded him had been murdered; that another was not yet appointed to the ſtation; and that, during the vacancy, he had, of his own authority, taken upon himſelf the diſcharge of the office.[b] This ſingular ſituation of the high-prieſthood took place during the interval between the death of Jonathan, who was murdered by order of Felix, and the acceſſion of Iſmael, who was inveſted with the high-prieſthood by Agrippa; and preciſely in this interval it happened, that St. Paul was apprehended, and brought before the Jewiſh council.

XXIII. (p. 323) Mat. xxvi. 59. "Now the *chief prieſts* and elders, and all the council, ſought falſe witneſs againſt him."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 18. c. 15. ſec. 3, 4. "Then might be ſeen the *high-prieſts themſelves*, with aſhes on their heads, and their breaſts naked."

The agreement here conſiſts in ſpeaking of the high-prieſts, or chief prieſts (for the name in the original is the ſame) in the *plural number*, when in ſtrictneſs there was only *one* high-prieſt: which may be conſidered as a proof, that the evangeliſts were habituated to the manner of ſpeaking then in uſe, becauſe they retain it, when it is neither accurate nor juſt. For the ſake of brevity I have put down from Joſephus, only a ſingle example of the application of this title in the plural number; but it is his uſual ſtyle.

Ib.

[a] Ant. lib. 18. c. 5. ſec. 3.

[b] Joſ. Ant. l. xx. c. 5. ſec. 2. c. vi. ſec. 2. c. 9. ſec. 2.

Ib. (p. 871) Luke iii. 1. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, *Annas and Caiaphas being high-priests*, the word of God came unto John." There is a passage in Josephus very nearly parallel to this, and which may at least serve to vindicate the evangelist from objection, with respect to his giving the title of high-priest to two persons at the same time: "Quadratus sent two others of the most powerful men of the Jews, as also the *high-priests Jonathan and Ananias*."[a] That Annas was a person in an eminent station, and possessed an authority co-ordinate with, or next to that of the high-priests properly so called, may be inferred from St. John's gospel, which, in the history of Christ's crucifixion, relates that "the soldiers led him away to Annas first."[b] And this might be noticed as an example of undesigned coincidence in the two evangelists.

Again, (p. 870) Acts iv. 6. Annas is called the high-priest, though Caiaphas was in the office of the high-priesthood. In like manner in Josephus,[c] "Joseph the son of Gorion, and the high-priest Ananus were chosen to be supreme governors of all things in the city." Yet Ananus, though here called the high-priest Ananus, was not then in the office of the high-priesthood. The truth is, there is an indeterminateness in the use of this title in the gospel; sometimes it is applied exclusively to the person who held the office at the time, sometimes to one or two more, who probably shared with him some of the powers or functions of the office; and, sometimes, to such of the priests as were eminent by their station or character: and there is the very same indeterminateness in Josephus.

XXIV. (p. 347) John xix. 19, 20. "And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross." That such was the custom of the Romans upon these occasions, appears from passages of Suetonius and Dio Cassius: "Patrem familias—

[a] De Bell. lib. II. c. 12. sec. 6.

[b] xviii. 13. [c] De Bell. 2. c. 20. sec. 3.

familias—canibus objecit, cum hoc *titulo* impie locutus parmularius." Suet. Domit. cap. 10. And in Dio Caſſius we have the following: "Having led him through the midſt of the court or aſſembly, *with a writing ſignifying the cauſe of his death*, and afterwards crucifying him." Book 54.

Ib. "And it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin." That it was alſo uſual, about this time, in Jeruſalem, to ſet up advertiſements in *different* languages, is gathered from the account which Joſephus gives, of an expoſtulatory meſſage from Titus to the Jews, when the city was almoſt in his hands; in which he ſays, Did ye not erect pillars with inſcriptions on them, *in the Greek and in our language*, "Let no one paſs beyond theſe bounds?"

XXV. (p. 352) Mat. xxvii. 26. "When he had *ſcourged* Jeſus, he delivered him to be crucified."

The following paſſages occur in Joſephus:

"Being *beaten*, they were crucified oppoſite to the citadel."[a]

"Whom, having *firſt ſcourged with whips*, he crucified."[b]

"He was burnt alive, *having been firſt beaten*."[c]

To which may be added one from Livy, lib. 11. c. 5. "Productique omnes, *virgiſque cæſi*, ac ſecuri percuſſi."

A modern example may illuſtrate the uſe we make of this inſtance. The preceding of a capital execution by the corporal puniſhment of the ſufferer, is a practice unknown in England, but retained, in ſome inſtances at leaſt, as appears by the late execution of a regicide, in Sweden. This circumſtance, therefore, in the account of an Engliſh execution purporting to come from an Engliſh writer, would not only bring a ſuſpicion upon the truth of the account, but would, in a conſiderable degree, impeach its pretenſions, of having been written by the author whoſe name it bore. Whereas, the ſame circumſtance, in the account of a Swediſh execution, would verify the account,



[a] Page 1247. 24 edit. Hudſ. [b] P. 1080. 45 edit.
[c] P. 1327. 43 edit.

and ſupport the authenticity of the book in which it was found; or, at leaſt, would prove that the author, whoever he was, poſſeſſed the information and the knowledge which he ought to poſſeſs.

XXVI. (p. 353) John xix. 16. "And they took Jeſus, and led him away, and he, *bearing his croſs*, went forth."

Plutarch de iis qui ſero puniuntur, p. 554. A. Paris, 1624. "Every kind of wickedneſs produces its own particular torment, juſt as every malefactor, when he is brought forth to execution, *carries his own croſs*."

XXVII. John xix. 32. "Then came the ſoldiers, and *brake the legs* of the firſt, and of the other, which was crucified with him."

Conſtantine aboliſhed the puniſhment of the croſs; in commending which edict, a heathen writer notices this very circumſtance of *breaking the legs*: "Eo pius, ut etiam vetus veterrimumque ſupplicium, patibulum, et *cruribus ſuffringendis*, primus removerit." Aur. Vict. Cæſ. cap. 41.

XXVIII. (p. 457) Acts iii. 1. "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the *ninth* hour."

Joſ. Ant. lib. 15. c. 7. ſec. 8. "Twice every day, in the morning, and at the *ninth* hour, the prieſts perform their duty at the altar."

XXIX. (p. 462) Acts xv. 21. "For Moſes, of old time, hath, in every city, them that preach him, *being read in the ſynagogues every Sabbath-day*."

Joſ. contra Ap. l. 2. "He (Moſes) gave us the law, the moſt excellent of all inſtitutions; nor did he appoint that it ſhould be heard once only, or twice, or often, but that, laying aſide all other works, we ſhould meet together *every week* to hear it *read*, and gain a perfect underſtanding of it."

XXX. (p. 465) Acts xxi. 23. "We have four men, which have a *vow* on them; them take, and purify thyſelf with them, that they may *ſhave their heads*."

Joſ.

Joſ. de Bell. l. 11. c. 15. "It is cuſtomary for thoſe who have been afflicted with ſome diſtemper, or have laboured under any other difficulties, to make a *vow* thirty days before they offer ſacrifices, to abſtain from wine, and *ſhave the hair of their heads.*"

Ib. v. 24. "Them take, and purify thyſelf with them, and *be at charges with them, that they may ſhave their heads.*"

Joſ. Ant. l. 19. c. 6. "He (Herod Agrippa) coming to Jeruſalem, offered up ſacrifices of thankſgiving, and omitted nothing that was preſcribed by the law. For which reaſon *he alſo ordered a good number of Nazarites to be ſhaved.*" We here find that it was an act of piety amongſt the Jews, to defray, for thoſe who were under the Nazaritic vow, the expenſes which attended its completion; and that the phraſe was, "that they might be ſhaved." The cuſtom and the expreſſion are both remarkable, and both in cloſe conformity with the ſcripture account.

XXXI. (p. 474) 2 Cor. xi. 24. "Of the Jews five times received I forty ſtripes, *ſave one.*"

Joſ. Ant. iv. c. 8. ſec. 21. "He that acts contrary hereto, let him receive forty ſtripes, *wanting one*, from the public officer."

The coincidence here is ſingular, becauſe the law *allowed* forty ſtripes:—"Forty ſtripes he may give him and not exceed." Deut. xxv. 3. It proves that the author of the epiſtle to the Corinthians was guided not by books, but by facts; becauſe his ſtatement agrees with the actual cuſtom, even when that cuſtom deviated from the written law, and from what he muſt have learnt by conſulting the Jewiſh code, as ſet forth in the Old Teſtament.

XXXII. (p. 490) Luke iii. 12. "Then came alſo *publicans* to be baptized." From this quotation, as well as from the hiſtory of Levi or Matthew (Luke v. 29) and of Zaccheus (Luke xix. 2) it appears, that the publicans or tax-gatherers were, frequently at leaſt, if not always, Jews: which, as the country was then under a Roman government, and the taxes were paid to the Romans, was

a circumſtance

a circumſtance not to be expected. That it was the truth however of the caſe, appears from a ſhort paſſage of Joſephus.

De Bell. lib. ii. c. xiv. ſec. 45. "But Florus not reſtraining theſe practices by his authority, the chief men of the Jews, *among whom was John the publican*, not knowing well what courſe to take, wait upon Florus, and give him eight talents of ſilver to ſtop the building."

XXXIII. (p. 496) Acts xxii. 25. "And, as they bound him with thongs, Paul ſaid unto the centurion that ſtood by, Is it lawful for you *to ſcourge a man that is a Roman*, and uncondemned?

"Facinus eſt vinciri civem Romanum: ſcelus verberari, Cic. in. ver."

"Cædebatur virgis, in medio foro Meſſanæ, civis Romanus, Judices, cum interea, nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia, iſtius miſeri, inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum, audiebatur, niſi hæc, *civis Romanus ſum*."

XXXIV. (p. 513) Acts xxii. 27. "Then the chief captain came, and ſaid unto him, (Paul) Tell me, art thou a Roman? He ſaid, Yea." The circumſtance here to be noticed is, that a *Jew* was a Roman citizen.

Joſ. Ant. lib. 14. c. 10. ſec. 13. "Lucius Lentulus, the conſul, declared, I have diſmiſſed from the ſervice, *the Jewiſh Roman citizens*, who obſerve the rites of the Jewiſh religion at Epheſus."

Ib. v. 27. "And the chief captain anſwered, With *a great ſum obtained I this freedom*."

Dio. Caſſius, l. 60. "This privilege, which had been *bought formerly at a great price*, became ſo cheap, that it was commonly ſaid, a man might be made a Roman citizen for a few pieces of broken glaſs."

XXXV. (p. 521) Acts xxviii. 16. "And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the priſoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was ſuffered to dwell by himſelf, with *a ſoldier that kept him*."

With which join v. 20. "For the hope of Iſrael I am bound with *this chain*."

"Quemadmodum

"Quemadmodum eadem *catena*, et cuſtodiam et *militem* copulat, ſic iſta, quæ tam diſſimilia ſunt, pariter incedunt." Seneca, Ep. 5.

"Proconſul æſtimare ſolet, utrum incarcerem recipienda ſit perſona, an *militi tradenda*." Ulpian, l. 1. ſec. de cuſtod. et exhib. reor.

In the confinement of Agrippa by the order of Tiberius, Antonia managed, that the centurion who preſided over the guards, and the *ſoldier to whom Agrippa was to be bound*, might be men of mild character. Joſ. Ant. lib. 18. c. 7. ſec. 5. After the acceſſion of Caligula, Agrippa alſo, like Paul, was ſuffered to dwell, yet as a priſoner, in his own houſe.

XXXVI. (p. 531) Acts xxvii. 1. "And when it was determined that we ſhould ſail into Italy, they delivered Paul, *and certain other priſoners*, unto one named Julius." Since not only Paul, but certain other *priſoners*, were ſent by the ſame ſhip into Italy, the text muſt be conſidered, as carrying with it an intimation, that the ſending of perſons from Judea to be tried at Rome, was an ordinary practice. That in truth it was ſo, is made out by a variety of examples which the writings of Joſephus furniſh; and amongſt others by the following, which comes near both to the time and the ſubject of the inſtance in the Acts. "Felix, for ſome ſlight offence, *bound and ſent to Rome* ſeveral prieſts of his acquaintance, and very good and honeſt men, to anſwer for themſelves to Cæſar." Joſ. Invit. ſec. 3.

XXXVII. (p. 539) Acts xi. 27. "And, in theſe days, came prophets from Jeruſalem unto Antioch; and there ſtood up one of them, named Agabus, and ſignified by the Spirit that there ſhould be a great dearth throughout all the world, (or all the country) *which came to paſs in the days of Claudius Cæſar*."

Joſ. Ant. l. 20. c. 4. ſec. 2. "In their time (i. e. about the fifth or ſixth year of Claudius) a great dearth happened in Judea."

XXXVIII.

XXXVIII. (p. 555) Acts xviii. 1, 2. "Becauſe that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome."

Suet. Claud. c. 25. "Judæos, impulſore Chreſto aſſidué tumultuantes, Româ expulit."

XXXIX. (p. 664) Acts v. 37. "After this man roſe up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him."

Joſ. de Bell. l. vii. "He (viz. the perſon, who, in another place, is called by Joſephus, Judas the Galilean, or Judas of Galilee) perſuaded not a few not to enroll themſelves, when Cyrenius the cenſor was ſent into Judea."

XL. (p. 942) Acts xxi. 38. "Art not thou that Egyptian, which, before theſe days, madeſt an uproar, and leddeſt out into the wilderneſs four thouſand men, that were murderers?"

Joſ. de Bell. l. 2. c. 13. ſec. 5. "But the Egyptian falſe prophet, brought a yet heavier diſaſter upon the Jews; for this impoſtor, coming into the country, and gaining the reputation of a prophet, gathered together thirty thouſand men, who were deceived by him. Having brought them round out of the wilderneſs, up to the mount of olives, he intended from thence to make his attack upon Jeruſalem; but Felix coming ſuddenly upon him with the Roman ſoldiers, prevented the attack. A great number, or (as it ſhould rather be rendered) the greateſt part of thoſe that were with him, were either ſlain, or taken priſoners."

In theſe two paſſages, the deſignation of the impoſtor, an "Egyptian," without his proper name; "the wilderneſs;" his eſcape, though his followers were deſtroyed; the time of the tranſaction, in the preſidentſhip of Felix, which could not be any long time before the words in Luke are ſuppoſed to have been ſpoken; are circumſtances of cloſe correſpondency. There is one, and only one, point of diſagreement, and that is, in the number of his followers, which in the Acts are called four thouſand, and by Joſephus thirty thouſand: but, beſide that the names of numbers,

bers, more than any other words, are liable to the errors of tranſcribers, we are, in the preſent inſtance, under the leſs concern to reconcile the evangeliſt with Joſephus, as Joſephus is not, in this point, conſiſtent with himſelf.

For whereas, in the paſſage here quoted, he calls the number thirty thouſand, and tells us that the greateſt part, or a great number (according as his words are rendered) of thoſe that were with him, were deſtroyed; in his Antiquities, he repreſents four hundred to have been killed upon this occaſion, and two hundred taken priſoners:[a] which certainly was not the "greateſt part," nor "a great part," nor "a great number," out of thirty thouſand. It is probable alſo, that Lyſias and Joſephus ſpoke of the expedition in its different ſtages: Lyſias of thoſe who followed the Egyptian out of Jeruſalem; Joſephus of all who were collected about him afterwards, from different quarters.

XLI. (Lardner's Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtimonies, Vol. III. p. 21) Acts xvii. 22. "Then Paul ſtood in the midſt of Mars-hill, and ſaid, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too ſuperſtitious; for, as I paſſed by and beheld your devotions, *I found an altar with this inſcription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.* Whom therefore ye ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you."

*Diogenes Laertius*, who wrote about the year 210, in his hiſtory of Epimenides, who is ſuppoſed to have flouriſhed nearly ſix hundred years before Chriſt, relates of him the following ſtory: that, being invited to Athens for the purpoſe, he delivered the city from a peſtilence in this manner—"Taking ſeveral ſheep, ſome black, others white, he had them up to the Areopagus, and then let them go where they would, and gave orders to thoſe who followed them, whereever any of them ſhould lie down, to ſacrifice it to the god to whom it belonged; and ſo the plague ceaſed. Hence," ſays the hiſtorian, "it has come to paſs, *that, to this preſent time, may be found in the boroughs of the Athenians* ANONYMOUS *altars*; a memorial of the expiation

[a] Lib. 20. c. 7. ſec. 6.

expiation then made."[a] Theſe altars, it may be preſumed, were called *anonymous*, becauſe there was not the name of any particular deity inſcribed upon them.

*Pauſanias*, who wrote before the end of the ſecond century, in his deſcription of Athens, having mentioned an altar of Jupiter Olympius, adds, "*and nigh unto it is an altar of unknown gods.*"[b] And, in another place, ſpeaks "*of altars of gods called unknown.*"[c]

*Philoſtratus*, who wrote in the beginning of the third century, records it as an obſervation of Apollonius Tyanæus, "that it was wiſe to ſpeak well of all the gods, *eſpecially at Athens, where altars of unknown demons were erected.*"[d]

The *author of the dialogue Philopatris*, by many ſuppoſed to have been Lucian, who wrote about the year 170, by others ſome anonymous heathen writer of the fourth century, makes Critias ſwear *by the unknown god of Athens*; and, near the end of the dialogue, has theſe words, "but let us find out *the unknown god at Athens*, and, ſtretching our hands to heaven, offer to him our praiſes and thankſgivings."[e]

This is a very curious and a very important coincidence. It appears beyond controverſy, that altars with this inſcription were exiſting at Athens, at the time when St. Paul is alleged to have been there. It ſeems alſo, which is very worthy of obſervation, that this inſcription was *peculiar* to the Athenians. There is no evidence that there were altars inſcribed "to the unknown god" in any other country. Suppoſing the hiſtory of St. Paul to have been a fable, how is it poſſible, that ſuch a writer as the author of the Acts of the apoſtles was, ſhould hit upon a circumſtance ſo extraordinary, and introduce it by an alluſion ſo ſuitable to St. Paul's office and character.

The

[a] In epimenide. l. 1. fegm. 110. [b] Pauſ. l. 5. p. 412.
[c] Ib. l. 1. p. 4. [d] Philoſ. Apoll. Tyan. l. 6. c. 3.
[e] Lucian in Philop. tom. 2. Græv. p. 767, 780.

The examples here collected, will be ſufficient, I hope, to ſatisfy us, that the writers of the Chriſtian hiſtory knew ſomething of what they were writing about. The argument is alſo ſtrengthened by the following conſiderations:

I. That theſe agreements appear, not only in articles of public hiſtory, but, ſometimes, in minute, recondite, and very peculiar circumſtances, in which, of all others, a forger is moſt likely to have been found tripping.

II. That the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which took place forty years after the commencement of the Chriſtian inſtitution, produced ſuch a change in the ſtate of the country, and the condition of the Jews, that a writer who was unacquainted with the circumſtances of the nation *before* that event, would find it difficult to avoid miſtakes, in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of tranſactions connected with thoſe circumſtances, foraſmuch as he could no longer have a living exemplar to copy from.

III. That there appears, in the writers of the New Teſtament, a knowledge of the affairs of thoſe times, which we do not find in authors of later ages. In particular, many of the Chriſtian writers of the ſecond and third centuries, and of the following ages, had falſe notions concerning the ſtate of Judea, between the nativity of Jeſus and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.[a] Therefore *they* could not have compoſed our hiſtories.

Amidſt ſo many conformities, we are not to wonder that we meet with ſome difficulties. The principal of theſe I will put down, together with the ſolutions which they have received. But in doing this I muſt be contented with a brevity, better ſuited to the limits of my volume, than to the nature of a controverſial argument. For the hiſtorical proofs of my aſſertions, and for the Greek criticiſms upon which ſome of them are founded, I refer the reader to the ſecond volume of the firſt part of Dr. Lardner's large work.



[a] Lard. part I. vol. II. p. 960.

I. The taxing, during which Jeſus was born, was "firſt made," as we read, according to our tranſlation, in St. Luke, "whilſt Cyrenius was governor of Syria."[a] Now it turns out, that Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until twelve, or, at the ſooneſt, ten years, after the birth of Chriſt; and that a taxing, cenſus, or aſſeſſment, was made in Judea in the beginning of his government. The charge, therefore, brought againſt the evangeliſt is, that, intending to refer to this taxing, he has miſplaced the date of it, by an error of ten or twelve years.

The anſwer to the accuſation is found in his uſing the word "firſt"—"And this taxing was *firſt* made;" for, according to the miſtake imputed to the evangeliſt, this word could have no ſignification whatever. It could have had no place in his narrative, becauſe, let it relate to what it will, taxing, cenſus, enrollment, or aſſeſſment, it imports that the writer had more than one of theſe in contemplation. It acquits him therefore of the charge, it is inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition, of his knowing only of the taxing in the beginning of Cyrenius's government. And if the evangeliſt knew, which this word proves that he did, of ſome other taxing beſide that, it is too much for the ſake of convicting him of a miſtake, to lay it down as certain, that he intended to refer to *that*.

The ſentence in St. Luke may be conſtrued thus: "This was the firſt aſſeſſment (or enrollment) of Cyrenius, governor of Syria;"[b] the words "governor of Syria" being uſed after the name of Cyrenius as his addition or title. And this title, belonging to him at the time of writing the account, was naturally enough ſubjoined to his

[a] C. ii. v. 2.

[b] If the word which we render "firſt" be rendered "before," which it has been ſtrongly contended that the Greek idiom allows of, the whole difficulty vaniſhes, for then the paſſage would be—"now this taxing was made before Cyrenius was governor of Syria;" which correſponds with the chronology. But I rather chooſe to argue, that, however the word "firſt" be rendered, to give it a meaning at all it militates with the objection. In this I think there can be no miſtake.

his name, though acquired after the tranſaction, which the account deſcribes. A modern writer, who was not very exact in the choice of his expreſſions, in relating the affairs of the Eaſt-Indies, might eaſily ſay, that ſuch a thing was done by *governor* Haſtings, though, in truth, the thing had been done by him before his advancement to the ſtation from which he received the name of governor. And this, as we contend, is preciſely the inaccuracy which has produced the difficulty in St. Luke.

At any rate, it appears from the form of the expreſſion, that he had two taxings or enrollments in contemplation. And if Cyrenius had been ſent upon this buſineſs into Judea, before he became governor of Syria, (againſt which ſuppoſition there is no proof, but rather external evidence of an enrollment going on about this time under ſome perſon or other[a]) then the cenſus on all hands acknowledged to have been made by him in the beginning of his government, would form a ſecond, ſo as to occaſion the other to be called the *firſt*.

II. Another chronological objection ariſes upon a date aſſigned in the beginning of the third chapter of St. Luke;[b] "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæſar----Jeſus *began to be about thirty* years of age;" for ſuppoſing Jeſus to have been born, as St. Matthew, and St. Luke alſo himſelf, relates, in the time of Herod, he muſt, according to the dates given in Joſephus, and by the Roman hiſtorians, have been at leaſt thirty-one years of age in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. If he was born, as St. Matthew's narrative intimates, one or two years before Herod's

[a] Joſephus (Ant. 17. c. 2. ſec. 6.) has this remarkable paſſage—"When therefore the whole Jewiſh nation took an oath to be faithful to Cæſar, and the intereſts of the king." This tranſaction correſponds in the courſe of the hiſtory with the time of Chriſt's birth. What is called a cenſus, and which we render taxing, was delivering upon oath an account of their property. This might be accompanied with an oath of fidelity, or might be miſtaken by Joſephus for it.

[b] Lard. part I. vol. II. p. 768.

Herod's death, he would have been thirty-two, or thirty-three years old, at that time.

This is the difficulty: the ſolution turns upon an alteration in the conſtruction of the Greek. St. Luke's words in the original are allowed, by the general opinion of learned men, to ſignify, not "that Jeſus began to be about thirty years of age," but "that he was about thirty years of age when he began his miniſtry." This conſtruction being admitted, the adverb "about" gives us all the latitude we want, and more; eſpecially when applied, as it is in the preſent inſtance, to a decimal number; for ſuch numbers, even without this qualifying addition, are often uſed in a laxer ſenſe than is here contended for.[a]

III. Acts v. 36. "For before theſe days roſe up Theudas, boaſting himſelf to be ſomebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themſelves: who was ſlain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were ſcattered and brought to nought."

Joſephus has preſerved the account of an impoſtor, of the name of Theudas, who created ſome diſturbances, and was ſlain; but, according to the date aſſigned to this man's appearance, (in which, however, it is very poſſible that Joſephus may have been miſtaken[b]) it muſt have been, at the leaſt, ſeven years after Gamaliel's ſpeech, of which this text is a part, was delivered. It has been replied to the objection,[c] that there might be two impoſtors of this name: and it has been obſerved, in order to give a general probability to the ſolution, that the ſame thing appears to have happened in other inſtances of the ſame kind. It is proved

[a] Livy, ſpeaking of the peace, which the conduct of Romulus had procured to the State, during the *whole* reign of his ſucceſſor * (Numa), has theſe words—"Ab illo enim profectis viribus datis tantum valuit, ut, in *quadraginta* deinde annos, tutam pacem haberet:" yet, afterwards, in the ſame chapter, "Romulus (he ſays) ſeptem et triginta regnavit annos, Numa tres et quadraginta."

[b] Michaelis's Introduction to the New Teſt. (Marſh's Tranſlation) vol. I. p. 61.

[c] Lardner, part I. vol. II. p. 922.

* *Liv. Hiſt. c. 1. ſec.* 16.

proved from Joſephus, that there were not fewer than four perſons of the name of Simon, within forty years, and not fewer than three, of the name of Judas, within ten years, who were all leaders of inſurrections: and it is likewiſe recorded by this hiſtorian, that, upon the death of Herod the Great, (which agrees very well with the time of the commotion referred to by Gamaliel, and with his manner of ſtating that time "before theſe days") there were innumerable diſturbances in Judea.[a] Archbiſhop Uſher was of opinion, that one of the three Judas's above mentioned was Gamaliel's Theudas;[b] and that, with a leſs variation of the name than we actually find in the goſpels, where one of the twelve apoſtles is called by Luke, Judas, and by Mark, Thaddeus.[c] Origen, however he came at his information, appears to have believed, that there was an impoſtor of the name of Theudas before the nativity of Chriſt.[d]

IV. Mat. xxiii. 34. "Wherefore, behold, I ſend unto you prophets, and wiſe men, and ſcribes: and ſome of them ye ſhall kill and crucify; and ſome of them ſhall ye ſcourge in your ſynagogues, and perſecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood ſhed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of *Zacharias, ſon of Barachias, whom ye ſlew between the temple and the altar.*"

There is a Zacharias, whoſe death is related in the ſecond book of Chronicles, in a manner which perfectly ſupports our Saviour's alluſion.[e] But this Zacharias was the ſon of *Jehoida.*

There

[a] Ant. l. 17. c. 12. ſec. 4. [b] Annals, p. 797.

[c] Luke vi. 16. Mark iii. 18. [d] Or. Con. Celſ. p. 44.

[e] "And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the ſon of Jehoida the prieſt, which ſtood above the people, and ſaid unto them, Thus ſaith God, why tranſgreſs ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot proſper? Becauſe ye have forſaken the Lord, he hath alſo forſaken you. And they conſpired againſt him, *and ſtoned him with ſtones, at the commandment of the king, in the court of the houſe of the Lord.*" 2 Chron. xxiv. 20.

There is alſo Zacharias the prophet; who was the ſon of Barachiah, and is ſo deſcribed in the ſuperſcription of his prophecy, but of whoſe death we have no account.

I have little doubt, but that the firſt Zacharias was the perſon ſpoken of by our Saviour; and that the name of the father has been ſince added, or changed, by ſome one, who took it from the title of the prophecy, which happened to be better known to him than the hiſtory in the Chronicles.

There is likewiſe a Zacharias, the ſon of Baruch, related by Joſephus to have been ſlain in the temple, a few years before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. It has been inſinuated, that the words put into our Saviour's mouth, contain a reference to this tranſaction, and were compoſed by ſome writer, who either confounded the time of the tranſaction with our Saviour's age, or inadvertently overlooked the anachroniſm.

Now ſuppoſe it to have been ſo; ſuppoſe theſe words to have been ſuggeſted by the tranſaction related in Joſephus, and to have been falſely aſcribed to Chriſt; and obſerve what extraordinary coincidences (accidentally, as it muſt in that caſe have been) attend the forger's miſtake.

Firſt, that we have a Zacharias in the book of Chronicles, whoſe death, and the manner of it, correſponds with the alluſion.

Secondly, that although the name of this perſon's father be erroneouſly put down in the goſpel, yet we have a way of accounting for the error, by ſhowing another Zacharias in the Jewiſh ſcriptures, much better known than the former, whoſe patronymic was actually that which appears in the text.

Every one, who thinks upon the ſubject, will find theſe to be circumſtances, which could not have met together in a miſtake, which did not proceed from the circumſtances themſelves.

I have noticed, I think, all the difficulties of this kind. They are few; ſome of them admit of a clear, others of a probable

probable ſolution. The reader will compare them with the number, the variety, the cloſeneſs, and the ſatisfactorineſs of the inſtances which are to be ſet againſt them; and he will remember the ſcantineſs, in many caſes, of our intelligence, and that difficulties always attend imperfect information.

## CHAP. VII.

### *Undeſigned Coincidences.*

BETWEEN the letters which bear the name of St. Paul in our collection, and his hiſtory in the Acts of the apoſtles, there exiſt many notes of correſpondency. The ſimple peruſal of the writings is ſufficient to prove, that neither the hiſtory was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the hiſtory. And the *undeſignedneſs* of the agreements, which undeſignedneſs is gathered from their latency, their minuteneſs, their obliquity, the ſuitableneſs of the circumſtances in which they conſiſt, to the places in which thoſe circumſtances occur, and the circuitous references by which they are traced out, demonſtrates that they have not been produced by meditation, or by any fraudulent contrivance. But coincidences, from which theſe cauſes are excluded, and which are too cloſe and numerous to be accounted for by accidental concurrences of fiction, muſt neceſſarily have truth for their foundation.

This argument appeared to my mind of ſo much value (eſpecially for its aſſuming nothing beſide the exiſtence of the books) that I have purſued it through St. Paul's thirteen epiſtles, in a work publiſhed by me four years ago under the title of Horæ Paulinæ. I am ſenſible how feebly any argument, which depends upon an induction of particulars, is repreſented without examples. On which account, I wiſhed to have abridged my own volume, in the manner

manner in which I have treated Dr. Lardner's in the preceding chapter. But, upon making the attempt, I did not find it in my power to render the articles intelligible by fewer words than I have there uſed. I muſt be content, therefore, to refer the reader to the work itſelf. And I would particularly invite his attention to the obſervations which are made in it upon the three firſt epiſtles. I perſuade myſelf that he will find the proofs, both of agreement and undeſignedneſs, ſupplied by theſe epiſtles, ſufficient to ſupport the concluſion which is there maintained, in favour both of the genuineneſs of the writings, and the truth of the narrative.

It remains only, in this place, to point out how the argument bears upon the general queſtion of the Chriſtian hiſtory.

Firſt, St. Paul in theſe letters affirms, in unequivocal terms, his own performance of miracles, and, what ought particularly to be remembered, "*that miracles were the ſigns of an apoſtle.*"[a] If this teſtimony come from St. Paul's own hand, it is invaluable. And that it does ſo, the argument before us fixes in my mind a firm aſſurance.

Secondly, it ſhows that the ſeries of action, repreſented in the epiſtles of St. Paul, was real; which alone lays a foundation for the propoſition, which forms the ſubject of the firſt part of our preſent work, viz. that the original witneſſes of the Chriſtian hiſtory devoted themſelves to lives of toil, ſuffering, and danger, in conſequence of their belief of the truth of that hiſtory, and for the ſake of communicating the knowledge of it to others.

Thirdly, it proves that Luke, or whoever was the author of the Acts of the apoſtles (for the argument does not depend upon the name of the author, though I know no reaſon for queſtioning it) was well acquainted with St. Paul's hiſtory; and that he probably was, what he profeſſes himſelf to be, a companion of St. Paul's travels: which if true, eſtabliſhes, in a conſiderable degree,

[a] Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.

gree, the credit even of his goſpel, becauſe it ſhows that the writer, from his time, ſituation, and connexions, poſſeſſed opportunities of informing himſelf truly concerning the tranſactions which he relates. I have little difficulty in applying to the goſpel of St. Luke what is proved concerning the Acts of the apoſtles, conſidering them as two parts of the ſame hiſtory; for, though there are inſtances of *ſecond* parts being forgeries, I know none where the ſecond part is genuine, and the firſt not ſo.

I will only obſerve, as a ſequel of the argument, though not noticed in my work, the remarkable ſimilitude between the ſtyle of St. John's goſpel, and of St. John's firſt epiſtle. The ſtyle of St. John's is not at all the ſtyle of St. Paul's epiſtles, though both are very ſingular; nor is it the ſtyle of St. James's or of St. Peter's epiſtle; but it bears a reſemblance to the ſtyle of the goſpel inſcribed with St. John's name, ſo far as that reſemblance can be expected to appear, which is not in ſimple narrative, ſo much as in reflections, and in the repreſentation of diſcourſes. Writings, ſo circumſtanced, prove themſelves, and one another, to be genuine. This correſpondency is the more valuable, as the epiſtle itſelf aſſerts, in St. John's manner indeed, but in terms ſufficiently explicit, the writer's perſonal knowledge of Chriſt's hiſtory: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you."[a] Who would not deſire, who perceives not the value of an account, delivered by a writer ſo well informed as this?

[a] C. i. v. 1, 3.

CHAP.

## CHAP. VIII.

### *Of the Hiſtory of the Reſurrection.*

THE hiſtory of the reſurrection of Chriſt is a part of the evidence of Chriſtianity; but I do not know, whether the proper ſtrength of this paſſage of the Chriſtian hiſtory, or wherein its peculiar value, as a head of evidence, conſiſts, be generally underſtood. It is not that, as a miracle, the reſurrection ought to be accounted a more deciſive proof of ſupernatural agency than other miracles are; it is not that, as it ſtands in the goſpels, it is better atteſted than ſome others; it is not, for either of theſe reaſons, that more weight belongs to it than to other miracles, but for the following, viz. that it is completely certain, that the apoſtles of Chriſt, and the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, aſſerted the fact. And this would have been certain, if the four goſpels had been loſt, or never written. Every piece of ſcripture recognizes the reſurrection. Every epiſtle of every apoſtle, every author contemporary with the apoſtles of the age immediately ſucceeding the apoſtles, every writing from that age to the preſent, genuine or ſpurious, on the ſide of Chriſtianity or againſt it, concur in repreſenting the reſurrection of Chriſt as an article of his hiſtory, received without doubt or diſagreement by all who called themſelves Chriſtians, as alleged from the beginning by the propagators of the inſtitution, and alleged as the centre of their teſtimony. Nothing, I apprehend, which a man does not himſelf ſee or hear, can be more certain to him than this point. I do not mean that nothing can be more certain than that Chriſt roſe from the dead; but that nothing can be more certain, than that his apoſtles, and the firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, gave out that he did ſo. In the other parts of the goſpel narrative, a queſtion may be made, whether the things, related of Chriſt, be the very things which the apoſtles and firſt teachers of the religion delivered concerning him. And this queſtion depends

pends a good deal upon the evidence we poſſeſs of the genuineneſs, or rather, perhaps, of the antiquity, credit, and reception of the books. Upon the ſubject of the reſurrection no ſuch diſcuſſion is neceſſary, becauſe no ſuch doubt can be entertained. The only points, which can enter into our conſideration, are, whether the apoſtles knowingly publiſhed a falſehood, or whether they were themſelves deceived: whether either of theſe ſuppoſitions be poſſible. The firſt, I think, is pretty generally given up. The nature of the undertaking, and of the men; the extreme unlikelihood that ſuch men ſhould engage in ſuch a meaſure as a *ſcheme;* their perſonal toils and dangers and ſufferings in the cauſe; their appropriation of their whole time to the object; the warm and ſeemingly unaffected zeal and earneſtneſs with which they profeſs their ſincerity, exempt their memory from the ſuſpicion of impoſture. The ſolution more deſerving of notice, is that which would reſolve the conduct of the apoſtles into *enthuſiaſm;* which would claſs the evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection with the numerous ſtories that are extant of the apparitions of dead men. There are circumſtances in the narrative, as it is preſerved in our hiſtories, which deſtroy this compariſon entirely. It was not one perſon, but many, who ſaw him; they ſaw him not only ſeparately, but together, not only by night but by day, not at a diſtance but near, not once but ſeveral times; they not only ſaw him, but touched him, converſed with him, eat with him, examined his perſon to ſatisfy their doubts. Theſe particulars are deciſive: but they ſtand, I do admit, upon the credit of our records. I would anſwer, therefore, the inſinuation of enthuſiaſm, by a circumſtance which ariſes out of the nature of the thing, and the reality of which muſt be confeſſed by all, who allow, what I believe is not denied, that the reſurrection of Chriſt, whether true or falſe, was aſſerted by his diſciples from the beginning; and that circumſtance is the non-production of the dead body. It is related in the hiſtory, what indeed the ſtory of the reſurrection neceſſarily implies, that the corpſe was miſſing out

of

of the ſepulchre: it is related alſo in the hiſtory, that the Jews reported that the followers of Chriſt had ſtolen it away.[a] And this account, though loaded with great improbabilities, ſuch as the ſituation of the diſciples, their fears for their own ſafety at the time, the unlikelihood of their expecting to ſucceed, the difficulty of actual ſucceſs,[b] and the inevitable conſequence of detection and failure, was nevertheleſs, the moſt credible account that could be given of the matter. But it proceeds entirely upon the ſuppoſition of fraud, as all the old objections did. What account can be given of the *body*, upon the ſuppoſition of enthuſiaſm? It is impoſſible our Lord's followers could believe that he was riſen from the dead, if his corpſe was lying before them. No enthuſiaſm ever reached to ſuch a pitch of extravagancy as that: a ſpirit may be an illuſion, a body is a real thing; an object of ſenſe, in which there can be no miſtake. All accounts of ſpectres leave the body in the grave. And, although the body of Chriſt might be removed by *fraud*, and for the purpoſes of fraud, yet, without any ſuch intention, and by ſincere but deluded men, which is the repreſentation of the apoſtolic character we are now examining, no ſuch attempt could be made. The preſence and the abſence of the dead body are alike inconſiſtent with the hypotheſis of enthuſiaſm; for if preſent, it muſt have

[a] "And this ſaying," St. Matthew writes, "is commonly reported amongſt the Jews until this day." (xxviii. 15) The evangeliſt may be thought good authority as to this point, even by thoſe who do not admit his evidence in every other point; and this point is ſufficient to prove that the body was miſſing.

It has alſo been rightly, I think, obſerved by Dr. Townſend, (Dif. upon the Reſ. p. 126) that the ſtory of the guards carried colluſion upon the face of it:—"His diſciples came by night, and ſtole him away, while we ſlept." Men in their circumſtances would not have made ſuch an acknowledgment of their negligence, without previous aſſurances of protection and impunity.

[b] "Eſpecially at the full moon, the city full of people, many probably paſſing the whole night, as Jeſus and his diſciples had done, in the open air, the ſepulchre ſo near the city as to be now incloſed within the walls." Prieſtly on the Reſur. p. 24.

have cured their enthuſiaſm at once; if abſent, fraud, not enthuſiaſm, muſt have carried it away.

But further, if we admit upon the concurrent teſtimony of all the hiſtories ſo much of the account as ſtates that the religion of Jeſus was ſet up at Jeruſalem, and ſet up with aſſerting, in the very place in which he had been buried, and a few days after he had been buried, his reſurrection out of the grave, it is evident that if his body could have been found, the Jews would have produced it as the ſhorteſt and completeſt anſwer poſſible to the whole ſtory. The attempt of the apoſtles could not have ſurvived this refutation a moment. If we alſo admit, upon the authority of St. Matthew, that the Jews were advertiſed of the expectation of Chriſt's followers, and that they had taken due precaution in conſequence of this notice, and that the body was in marked and public cuſtody, the obſervation receives more force ſtill. For, notwithſtanding their precaution, and although thus prepared and forewarned; when the ſtory of the reſurrection came forth, as it immediately did; when it was publickly aſſerted by his diſciples, and made the ground and baſis of their preaching in his name, and collecting followers to his religion, the Jews had not the body to produce: but were obliged to meet the teſtimony of the apoſtles by an anſwer, not containing indeed any impoſſibility in itſelf, but abſolutely inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of their integrity; that is, in other words, inconſiſtent with the ſuppoſition, which would reſolve their conduct into enthuſiaſm.

## CHAP. IX.

### *The Propagation of Chriſtianity.*

IN this argument, the firſt conſideration is the fact; in what degree, within what time, and to what extent, Chriſtianity actually was propagated.

The accounts of the matter, which can be collected from our books, are as follow: A *few days* after Chriſt's diſappearance out of the world, we find an aſſembly of diſciples at Jeruſalem, to the number of "about one hundred and twenty;"[a] which hundred and twenty were, probably, a little aſſociation of believers, met together, not merely as believers in Chriſt, but as perſonally connected with the apoſtles, and with one another. Whatever was the number of believers then in Jeruſalem, we have no reaſon to be ſurpriſed that ſo ſmall a company ſhould aſſemble; for there is no proof that the followers of Chriſt were yet formed into a ſociety, that the ſociety was reduced into any order, that it was at this time even underſtood that a new religion (in the ſenſe which that term conveys to us) was to be ſet up in the world, or how the profeſſors of that religion were to be diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of mankind. The death of Chriſt had left, we may ſuppoſe, the generality of his diſciples in great doubt, both as to what they were to do, and concerning what was to follow.

This meeting was held, as we have already ſaid, a few days after Chriſt's aſcenſion; for ten days after that event was the day of Pentecoſt, when, as our hiſtory relates,[b] upon a ſignal diſplay of divine agency attending the perſons of the apoſtles, there were added to the ſociety "about three thouſand ſouls."[c] But here, it is not, I think, to be taken, that theſe three thouſand were all converted by this ſingle miracle; but rather that many, who were before believers in Chriſt, became now profeſſors of Chriſtianity; that is to ſay, when they found that a religion was to be eſtabliſhed, a ſociety formed and ſet up in the name of Chriſt, governed by his laws, avowing their belief in his miſſion, united amongſt themſelves and ſeparated from the reſt of the world by viſible diſtinctions, in purſuance of their former conviction, and by virtue of what they had heard and ſeen and known of Chriſt's hiſtory, they publickly became members of it.

We

[a] Acts i. 5. [b] Acts ii. 1. [c] Ib. ii. 41.

We read in the fourth[a] chapter of the Acts, that ſoon after this, "the number of the men," i. e. of the ſociety openly profeſſing their belief in Chriſt, "was about five thouſand." So that here is an increaſe of two thouſand within a very ſhort time. And it is probable that there were many, both now and afterwards, who, although they believed in Chriſt, did not think it neceſſary to join themſelves to this ſociety; or who waited to ſee what was likely to become of it. Gamaliel, whoſe advice to the Jewiſh council is recorded Acts iv. 34. appears to have been of this deſcription; perhaps Nicodemus, and perhaps alſo Joſeph of Arimathea. This claſs of men, their character and their rank, are likewiſe pointed out by St. John, in the twelfth chapter of his goſpel, "nevertheleſs among the chief rulers alſo many believed on him; but becauſe of the Phariſees they did not confeſs him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue: for they loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God." Perſons ſuch as theſe, might admit the miracles of Chriſt, without being immediately convinced that they were under obligation to make a public profeſſion of Chriſtianity, at the riſk of all that was dear to them in life, and even of life itſelf.[b]

Chriſtianity,

[a] Verſe 4.

[b] "Beſide thoſe who profeſſed, and thoſe who rejected and oppoſed Chriſtianity, there were, in all probability, multitudes between both, neither perfect Chriſtians, nor yet unbelievers. They had a favourable opinion of the goſpel, but worldly conſiderations made them unwilling to own it. There were many circumſtances which inclined them to think that Chriſtianity was a divine revelation, but there were many inconveniencies which attended the open profeſſion of it; and they could not find in themſelves courage enough to bear them, to diſoblige their friends and family, to ruin their fortunes, to loſe their reputation, their liberty and their life, for the ſake of the new religion. Therefore they were willing to hope, that if they endeavoured to obſerve the great precepts of morality, which Chriſt had repreſented as the principal part, the ſum and ſubſtance of religion; if they thought honourably of the goſpel, if they offered no injury to the Chriſtians, if they did them all the ſervices that they could *ſafely* perform, they were willing to hope that God would accept this, and that he would excuſe and forgive the reſt." Jortin's Diſ. on the Chriſt. Rel. p. 91. ed. 4.

Chriſtianity, however, proceeded to increaſe in Jeruſalem by a progreſs equally rapid with its firſt ſucceſs; for, in the next[a] chapter of our hiſtory, we read that "believers were the more added to the Lord, *multitudes* both of men and women." And this enlargement of the new ſociety appears in the firſt verſe of the ſucceeding chapter, wherein we are told, that, "when the number of the diſciples was *multiplied*, there aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews becauſe their widows were neglected;"[b] and, afterwards in the ſame chapter, it is declared expreſsly, that "the number of the diſciples multiplied in Jeruſalem greatly, and that a great company of the prieſts were obedient to the faith."

This I call the firſt period in the propagation of Chriſtianity. It commences with the aſcenſion of Chriſt; and extends, as may be collected from incidental notes of time,[c] to ſomething more than one year after that event. During which term the preaching of Chriſtianity, ſo far as our documents inform us, was confined to the ſingle city of Jeruſalem. And how did it ſucceed there? The firſt aſſembly which we meet with of Chriſt's diſciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, conſiſted of "one hundred and twenty." About a week after this "three thouſand were added" in one day; and the number of Chriſtians, publickly baptized, and publickly aſſociating together, were very ſoon increaſed to "five thouſand." "Multitudes both of men and women continued to be added:" "diſciples multiplied greatly," and "many of the Jewiſh prieſthood, as well as others, became obedient to the faith;" and this within a ſpace of leſs than two years from the commencement of the inſtitution.

By reaſon of a perſecution raiſed againſt the church at Jeruſalem, the converts were driven from that city, and diſperſed throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.[d] Whereever

[a] Ib. v. 14. [b] Ib. vi. 1.

[c] Vide Pearſon's Antiq. l. xviii. c. 7. Benſon's Hiſt. of Chriſt. book i. p. 148.

[d] Ib. viii. 1.

Whereever they came, they brought their religion with them; for our hiſtorian informs us,[a] that, "they that were ſcattered abroad, went every where preaching the word." The effect of this preaching comes afterwards to be noticed, where the hiſtorian is led, in the courſe of his narrative, to obſerve, that *then*, (i. e. about three years[b] poſterior to this) "the churches had reſt throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were ediſied, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghoſt, were multiplied." This was the work of the ſecond period, which compriſes about four years.

Hitherto the preaching of the goſpel had been confined to Jews, to Jewiſh proſelytes, and to Samaritans. And I cannot forbear from ſetting down, in this place, an obſervation of Mr. Bryant's, which appears to me to be perfectly well founded:—"The Jews ſtill remain, but how ſeldom is it that we can make a ſingle proſelyte? There is reaſon to think, that there were more converted by the apoſtles in one day, than have ſince been won over in the laſt thouſand years."[c]

It was not yet known to the apoſtles, that they were at liberty to propoſe the religion to mankind at large. That "myſtery," as St. Paul calls it,[d] and as it then was, was revealed to Peter by an eſpecial miracle. It appears to have been[e] about ſeven years after Chriſt's aſcenſion, that the goſpel was preached to the Gentiles of Ceſarea. A year after this, a great multitude of Gentiles were converted at Antioch in Syria. The expreſſions employed by the hiſtorian are theſe—"a great number believed, and turned to the Lord;" "much people was added unto the Lord;" "the apoſtles Barnabas and Paul taught much people."[f] Upon Herod's death, which happened in the next year,[g] it is obſerved, that "the word of God grew

[a] Ver. 4. [b] Benſon, b. I. p. 207.
[c] Bryant on the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, p. 112.
[d] Epheſ. iii. 3—6. [e] Benſon, b. II. p. 236.
[f] Ib. xi. 21, 24, 26. [g] Benſon, b. II. p. 289.

grew and multiplied."[a] Three years from this time, upon the preaching of Paul at Iconium, the metropolis of Lycaonia, "a great multitude both of Jews and Greeks believed;"[b] and afterwards, in the courſe of this very progreſs, he is repreſented as "making many diſciples" at Derbe, a principal city in the ſame diſtrict. Three years[c] after this, which brings us to ſixteen after the aſcenſion, the apoſtles wrote a public letter from Jeruſalem to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, with which letter Paul travelled through theſe countries, and found the churches "eſtabliſhed in the faith, and increaſing in number daily."[d] From Aſia the apoſtle proceeded into Greece, where ſoon after his arrival in Macedonia, we find him at Theſſalonica; in which city "ſome of the Jews believed, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude."[e] We meet alſo here with an accidental hint of the general progreſs of the Chriſtian miſſion, in the exclamation of the tumultuous Jews of Theſſalonica, "that they, who had turned the world upſide down, were come thither alſo."[f] At Berea, the next city at which St. Paul arrives, the hiſtorian, who was preſent, informs us that "*many* of the Jews believed."[g] The next year and half St. Paul's miniſtry was ſpent at Corinth. Of his ſucceſs in that city we receive the following intimations: "that *many* of the Corinthians believed and were baptized," and "that it was revealed to the apoſtle by Chriſt, that he had *much* people in that city."[h] Within leſs than a year after his departure from Corinth, and twenty-five[i] years after the aſcenſion, St. Paul fixed his ſtation at Epheſus, for the ſpace of two years[k] and ſomething more. The effect of his miniſtry in that city and neighbourhood, drew from the hiſtorian a reflection, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."[l] And at the concluſion

[a] xii. 24. [b] Ib. xiv. 1.
[c] Benſon's Hiſt. Chriſt. b. III. p. 50.
[d] xvi. 5. [e] xvii. 4. [f] Ib. v. 6.
[g] xvii. 12. [h] Ib. xviii. 8—10. [i] Benſon, b. III. p. 160.
[k] Acts xix. 10. [l] xix. 20.

cluſion of this period, we find Demetrius at the head of a party, who were alarmed by the progreſs of the religion, complaining, that "not only at Epheſus, but alſo throughout all Aſia, (i. e. the province of Lydia, and the country adjoining to Epheſus) this Paul hath perſuaded and turned away much people."[a] Beſide theſe accounts, there occur, incidentally, mention of converts at Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi.

This is the third period in the propagation of Chriſtianity, ſetting off in the ſeventh year after the aſcenſion, and ending at the twenty-eighth. Now, lay theſe three periods together, and obſerve how the progreſs of the religion by theſe accounts is repreſented. The inſtitution, which properly *began* only after its author's removal from the world, before the end of thirty years, has ſpread itſelf throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria, almoſt all the numerous diſtricts of the leſſer Aſia, through Greece, and the iſlands of the Ægean Sea, the ſea coſt of Africa, and had extended itſelf to Rome, and into Italy. At Antioch in Syria, at Joppa, Epheſus, Corinth, Theſſalonica, Berea, Iconium, Derbe, Antioch in Piſidia, at Lydda, Saron, the number of converts is intimated by the expreſſions "a great number," "great multitudes," "much people." Converts are mentioned, without any deſignation of their number,[b] at Tyre, Ceſarea, Troas, Athens, Philippi, Lyſtra, Damaſcus. During all this time, Jeruſalem continued

[a] Ib. v. 26.

[b] Conſidering the extreme conciſeneſs of many parts of the hiſtory, the ſilence about the numbers of converts is no proof of their paucity: for at Philippi, no mention whatever is made of the number, yet St. Paul addreſſed an epiſtle to that church. The churches of Galatia, and the affairs of thoſe churches, were conſiderable enough to be the ſubject of another letter, and of much of St. Paul's ſolicitude, yet no account is preſerved in the hiſtory of his ſucceſs, or even of his preaching, in that country, except the ſlight notice which theſe words convey:—"when they had gone throughout Phrygia, and the region of Galatia, they aſſayed to go into Bythinia." xvi. 6, 7.

continued not only the centre of the miſſion, but a principal ſeat of the religion; for when St. Paul returned thither, at the concluſion of the period of which we are now conſidering the accounts, the other apoſtles pointed out to him, as a reaſon for his compliance with their advice, "how many thouſands (myriads, ten thouſands) there were in that city who believed."[a]

Upon this abſtract, and the writing from which it is drawn, the following obſervations ſeem material to be made:

I. That the account comes from a perſon, who was himſelf concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary with the whole of it; who viſited Jeruſalem, and frequented the ſociety of thoſe who had acted, and were acting, the chief parts in the tranſaction. I lay down this point poſitively; for had the ancient atteſtations to this valuable record been leſs ſatisfactory than they are, the unaffectedneſs and ſimplicity with which the author notices his preſence upon certain occaſions, and the entire abſence of art and deſign from theſe notices, would have been ſufficient to perſuade my mind, that, whoever he was, he actually lived in the times, and occupied the ſituation in which he repreſents himſelf to be. When I ſay "whoever he was," I do not mean to caſt a doubt upon the name, to which antiquity hath aſcribed the Acts of the apoſtles, (for there is no cauſe, that I am acquainted with, for queſtioning it) but to obſerve, that in ſuch a caſe as this, the time and ſituation of the author is of more importance than his name; and that *theſe* appear from the work itſelf, and in the moſt unſuſpicious form.

II. That this account is a very incomplete account of the preaching and propagation of Chriſtianity; I mean, that, if what we read in the hiſtory be true, much more than what the hiſtory contains muſt be true alſo. For, although the narrative from which our information is derived has been entitled the Acts of the apoſtles, it is in fact a hiſtory of the twelve apoſtles only during a ſhort time of their continuing

[a] Ib. xxi. 20.

continuing together at Jeruſalem; and even of this period the account is very conciſe. The work afterwards conſiſts of a few important paſſages of Peter's miniſtry, of the ſpeech and death of Stephen, of the preaching of Philip the deacon; and the ſequel of the volume, that is, two thirds of the whole is taken up with the converſion, the travels, the diſcourſes and hiſtory, of the new apoſtle Paul, in which hiſtory alſo large portions of time are often paſſed over with very ſcanty notice.

III. That the account, ſo far as it goes, is for this very reaſon more credible. Had it been the author's deſign to have *diſplayed* the early progreſs of Chriſtianity, he would undoubtedly have collected, or, at leaſt, have ſet forth, accounts of the preaching of the reſt of the apoſtles, who cannot, without extreme improbability, be ſuppoſed to have remained ſilent and inactive, or not to have met with a ſhare of that ſucceſs which attended their colleagues. To which may be added, as an obſervation of the ſame kind,

IV. That the intimations of the number of converts, and of the ſucceſs of the preaching of the apoſtles, come out for the moſt part *incidentally*; are drawn from the hiſtorian by the occaſion; ſuch as the murmuring of the Grecian converts, the reſt from perſecution, Herod's death, the ſending of Barnabas to Antioch, and Barnabas calling Paul to his aſſiſtance, Paul coming to a place and finding there diſciples, the clamour of the Jews, the complaint of artificers intereſted in the ſupport of the popular religion, the reaſon aſſigned to induce Paul to give ſatisfaction to the Chriſtians of Jeruſalem. Had it not been for theſe occaſions, it is probable that no notice whatever would have been taken of the number of converts, in ſeveral of the paſſages in which that notice now appears. All this tends to remove the ſuſpicion of any deſign to exaggerate or deceive.

PARALLEL TESTIMONIES with the hiſtory, are the letters which have come down to us of St. Paul, and of the other apoſtles. Thoſe of St. Paul are addreſſed to the churches

churches of Corinth, Philippi, Theſſalonica, the church of Galatia, and, if the inſcription be right, of Epheſus, his miniſtry at all which places is recorded in the hiſtory; to the church of Coloſſe, or rather to the churches of Coloſſe and Laodicea jointly, which he had not then viſited. They recognize by reference the churches of Judea, the churches of Aſia, and "all the churches of the Gentiles."[a] In the epiſtle to the Romans,[b] the author is led to deliver a remarkable declaration, concerning the extent of his preaching, its efficacy, and the cauſe to which he aſcribes it, "to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty ſigns and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, ſo that, from Jeruſalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the goſpel of Chriſt." In the epiſtle to the Coloſſians,[c] we find an oblique, but very ſtrong ſignification, of the then general ſtate of the Chriſtian miſſion, at leaſt as it appeared to St. Paul: "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and ſettled, and be not moved away from the hope of the goſpel, which ye have heard, and *which was preached to every creature which is under heaven?*" which goſpel, he had reminded them near the beginning[d] of his letter, "was preſent with them *as it was in all the world.*" The expreſſions are hyperbolical; but they are hyperboles which could only be uſed by a writer who entertained a ſtrong ſenſe of the ſubject. The firſt epiſtle of Peter accoſts the Chriſtians diſperſed throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Aſia and Bithynia.

[a] 1 Theſſ. 11, 14. Rom. xvi. 19, 4. [b] xv. 18, 19.
[c] i. 23. [d] i. 6.

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## SECT. I.

IT comes next to be conſidered, how far theſe accounts are confirmed, or followed up, by other evidence.

Tacitus,

Tacitus, in delivering a relation, which has already been laid before the reader, of the fire which happened at Rome in the tenth year of Nero, which coincides with the thirtieth year after Chriſt's aſcenſion, aſſerts, that the emperor, in order to ſuppreſs the rumours of having been himſelf the author of the miſchief, procured the Chriſtians to be accuſed. Of which Chriſtians, thus brought into his narrative, the following is ſo much of the hiſtorian's account, as belongs to our preſent purpoſe. "They had their denomination from Chriſtus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious ſuperſtition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and ſpread not only over Judea, but reached the city alſo. At firſt they only were apprehended, who confeſſed themſelves of that ſect; afterwards *a vaſt multitude* were diſcovered by them." This teſtimony to the early propagation of Chriſtianity is extremely material. It is from an hiſtorian of great reputation, living near the time, from a ſtranger and an enemy to the religion; and it joins immediately with the period through which the ſcripture accounts extend. It eſtabliſhes theſe points, that the religion began at Jeruſalem, that it ſpread throughout Judea, that it had reached Rome, and not only ſo, but that it had there obtained a great number of converts. This was about ſix years after the time that St. Paul wrote his epiſtle to the Romans, and ſomething more than two years after he arrived there himſelf. The converts to the religion were then ſo numerous at Rome, that of thoſe who were betrayed by the information of the perſons firſt proſecuted, a great multitude (multitudo ingens) were diſcovered and ſeized.

It ſeems probable, that the temporary check which Tacitus repreſents Chriſtianity to have received (repreſſa in præſens) referred to the perſecution at Jeruſalem, which followed the death of Stephen; (Acts viii.) and which, by diſperſing the converts, cauſed the inſtitution, in ſome meaſure, to diſappear. Its ſecond eruption at the ſame place, and within a ſhort time, has much in it of the character

acter of truth. It was the firmneſs and perſeverance of men who knew what they relied upon.

Next in order of time, and perhaps ſuperior in importance, is the teſtimony of Pliny the younger. Pliny was the Roman governor of Pontus and Bithynia, two conſiderable diſtricts in the northern part of Aſia Minor. The ſituation in which he found his province, led him to apply to the emperor (Trajan) for his direction, as to the conduct he was to hold towards the Chriſtians. The letter, in which this application is contained, was written not quite eighty years after Chriſt's aſcenſion. The preſident in this letter, ſtates the meaſures he had already purſued, and then adds, as his reaſon for reſorting to the emperor's counſel and authority, the following words:—"Suſpending all judicial proceedings, I have recourſe to you for advice; for it has appeared to me a matter highly deſerving conſideration, eſpecially upon account of the great number of perſons who are in danger of ſuffering: for many of all ages, and of every rank, of both ſexes likewiſe, are accuſed, and will be accuſed. Nor has the contagion of this ſuperſtition ſeized cities only, but the leſſer towns alſo, and the open country. Nevertheleſs it ſeemed to me that it may be reſtrained and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almoſt forſaken, begin to be more frequented; and the ſacred ſolemnities, after a long intermiſſion, are revived. Victims, likewiſe, are every where (paſſim) bought up; whereas, for ſome time, there were few to purchaſe them. Whence it is eaſy to imagine, what numbers of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted to thoſe that ſhall repent."[a]

It is obvious to obſerve, that the paſſage of Pliny's letter, here quoted, proves not only that the Chriſtians in Pontus and Bithynia were now numerous, but that they had ſubſiſted there for ſome conſiderable time. "It is certain (he ſays) that the temples, which were almoſt forſaken, (plainly aſcribing this deſertion of the popular worſhip to the prevalency of Chriſtianity) begin to be more frequented;

[a] C. Plin. Trajano Imp. lib. x. ep. xcvii.

frequented; and the ſacred ſolemnities, after a *long* interminiſſion, are revived." There are alſo two clauſes in the former part of the letter which indicate the ſame thing; one, in which he declares that he had "never been preſent at any trials of Chriſtians, and therefore knew not what was the uſual ſubject of inquiry and puniſhment, or how far either was wont to be urged:" the ſecond clauſe is the following; "others were named by an informer, who, at firſt, confeſſed themſelves Chriſtians, and afterwards denied it; the reſt ſaid, they had been Chriſtians, ſome three years ago, ſome longer, and ſome above twenty years." It is alſo apparent that Pliny ſpeaks of the Chriſtians as a deſcription of men well known to the perſon to whom he writes. His firſt ſentence concerning them is, "I have never been preſent at the trials of Chriſtians." This mention of the name of Chriſtians, without any preparatory explanation, ſhows that it was a term familiar both to the writer of the letter, and the perſon to whom it was addreſſed. Had it not been ſo, Pliny would naturally have begun his letter by informing the emperor, that he had met with a certain ſet of men in the province called Chriſtians.

Here then is a very ſignal evidence of the progreſs of the Chriſtian religion in a ſhort ſpace. It was not fourſcore years after the cruciſixion of Jeſus when Pliny wrote this letter; nor ſeventy years ſince the apoſtles of Jeſus began to mention his name to the Gentile world. Bithynia and Pontus were at a great diſtance from Judea, the centre from which the religion ſpread; yet in theſe provinces Chriſtianity had long ſubſiſted, and Chriſtians were now in ſuch numbers, as to lead the Roman governor to report to the emperor, that they were found, not only in cities, but in villages and in open countries; of all ages, of every rank and condition; that they abounded ſo much, as to have produced a viſible deſertion of the temples; that beaſts brought to market for victims had few purchaſers; that the ſacred ſolemnities were much neglected; circumſtances noted by Pliny, for the expreſs purpoſe of ſhowing

to the emperor the effect and prevalency of the new inſtitution.

No evidence remains, by which it can be proved that the Chriſtians were more numerous in Pontus and Bithynia than in other parts of the Roman empire; nor has any reaſon been offered to ſhow why they ſhould be ſo. Chriſtianity did not begin in theſe countries, nor near them. I do not know, therefore, that we ought to confine the deſcription in Pliny's letter to the ſtate of Chriſtianity in thoſe provinces, even if no other account of the ſame ſubject had come down to us; but, certainly, this letter may fairly be applied in aid and confirmation of the repreſentations given of the general ſtate of Chriſtianity in the world, by Chriſtian writers of that and the next ſucceeding age.

Juſtin Martyr, who wrote about thirty years after Pliny and one hundred and ſix after the aſcenſion, has theſe remarkable words: "There is not a nation, either of Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of thoſe who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongſt whom prayers and thankſgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the univerſe by the name of the crucified Jeſus."[a] Tertullian, who comes about fifty years after Juſtin, appeals to the governors of the Roman empire in theſe terms: "We were but of yeſterday, and we have filled your cities, iſlands, towns and boroughs, the camp, the ſenate, and the forum. They (the heathen adverſaries of Chriſtianity) lament, that every ſex, age and condition, and perſons of every rank alſo, are converts to that name."[b] I do allow that theſe expreſſions are looſe, and may be called declamatory. But even declamation hath its bounds: this public boaſting upon a ſubject, which muſt be known to every reader, was not only uſeleſs but unnatural, unleſs the truth of the caſe, in a conſiderable degree, correſponded with the deſcription; at leaſt unleſs it had been both true and notorious, that great multitudes of Chriſtians, of all ranks and orders, were to be

[a] Dial. cum Tryph. [b] Tertull. Apol. c. 37.

be found in moſt parts of the Roman empire. The ſame Tertullian, in another paſſage, by way of ſetting forth the extenſive diffuſion of Chriſtianity, enumerates as belonging to Chriſt, beſide many other countries, the "Moors and Gætulians of Africa, the borders of Spain, ſeveral nations of France and parts of Britain inacceſſible to the Romans, the Sarmatians, Daci, Germans, and Scythians:"[a] and, which is more material than the extent of the inſtitution, the *number* of Chriſtians in the ſeveral countries in which it prevailed, is thus expreſſed by him: "Although ſo great a multitude, that in almoſt every city we form the greater part, we paſs our time modeſtly and in ſilence."[b] Clement Alexandrinus, who preceded Tertullian by a few years, introduces a compariſon between the ſucceſs of Chriſtianity, and that of the moſt celebrated philoſophical inſtitutions. "The philoſophers were confined to Greece, and to their particular retainers: but the doctrine of the Maſter of Chriſtianity did not remain in Judea, as philoſophy did in Greece, but is ſpread throughout the whole world, in every nation and village and city, both of Greeks and Barbarians, converting both whole houſes and ſeparate individuals, having already brought over to the truth not a few of the philoſophers themſelves. If the Greek philoſophy be prohibited, it immediately vaniſhes; whereas, from the firſt preaching of *our* doctrine, kings and tyrants, governors and preſidents, with their whole train, and with the populace on their ſide, have endeavoured with their whole might to exterminate it, yet doth it flouriſh more and more."[c] Origen, who follows Tertullian at the diſtance of only thirty years, delivers nearly the ſame account: "In every part of the world, (ſays he) throughout all Greece, and in all other nations, there are innumerable and immenſe multitudes, who, having left the laws of their country, and thoſe whom they eſteemed gods, have given themſelves up to the law of Moſes, and the religion of Chriſt; and this, not

[a] Ad Jud. c. 7. [b] Ad Scap. c. III.
[c] Clem. Al. Strom. lib. vi. ad fin.

not without the bittereſt reſentment from the idolaters, by whom they were frequently put to torture, and ſometimes to death: and it is wonderful to obſerve, how, in ſo ſhort a time, the religion has increaſed, amidſt puniſhment and death, and every kind of torture."[a] In another paſſage Origen draws the following candid compariſon between the ſtate of Chriſtianity in his time, and the condition of its more primitive ages:—"By the good providence of God the Chriſtian religion has ſo flouriſhed and increaſed continually, that it is now preached freely without moleſtation, although there were a thouſand obſtacles to the ſpreading of the doctrine of Jeſus in the world. But as it was the will of God, that the Gentiles ſhould have the benefit of it, all the councils of men againſt the Chriſtians were defeated; and by how much the more emperors and governors of provinces, and the people every where, ſtrove to depreſs them, ſo much the more have they increaſed and prevailed exceedingly."[b]

It is well known, that within leſs than eighty years after this, the Roman empire became Chriſtian under Conſtantine; and it is probable that Conſtantine declared himſelf on the ſide of the Chriſtians becauſe they were the powerful party: for Arnobius, who wrote immediately before Conſtantine's acceſſion, ſpeaks of the whole world as filled with Chriſt's doctrine, of its diffuſion throughout all countries, of an innumerable body of Chriſtians in diſtant provinces, of the ſtrange revolution of opinion, of men of the greateſt genius, orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, phyſicians, having come over to the inſtitution, and that alſo in the face of threats, executions, and tortures."[c] And not more than twenty years after Conſtantine's entire poſſeſſion of the empire, Julius Firmicus Maternus calls upon the emperors Conſtantius and Conſtans to extirpate the relics of the ancient religion; the reduced and fallen condition of which is deſcribed by our author

[a] Or. in Celſ. lib. 1. [b] Or. Con. Celſ. lib. vii.

[c] Arnob. in Gentes, l. 1. p. 27, 9, 24, 42, 44. Ed. Lug. Bat. 1650.

thor in the following words:—"Licet adhuc in quibuſdam regionibus idololatriæ morientia palpitent membra, tamen in eo res eſt, ut a Chriſtianis omnibus terris peſtiferum hoc malum funditus amputetur;" and in another place, "Modicum tantum ſupereſt, ut legibus veſtris—extincta idololatriæ pereat funeſta contagio."[a] It will not be thought that we quote this writer in order to recommend his temper or his judgment, but to ſhow the comparative ſtate of Chriſtianity and of heatheniſm at this period. Fifty years afterwards, Jerome repreſents the decline of paganiſm in language which conveys the ſame idea of its approaching extinction: "Solitudinem patitur et in urbe gentilitas. Dii quondam nationum, cum bubonibus et noctuis, in ſolis culminibus remanſerunt."[b] Jerome here indulges a triumph, natural and allowable in a zealous friend of the cauſe, but which could only be ſuggeſted to his mind by the conſent and univerſality with which he ſaw the religion received. "But now (ſays he) the paſſion and reſurrection of Chriſt are celebrated in the diſcourſes and writings of all nations. I need not mention Jews, Greeks and Latins. The Indians, Perſians, Goths and Egyptians, philoſophiſe, and firmly believe the immortality of the ſoul and future recompenſes, which, before, the greateſt philoſophers had denied, or doubted of, or perplexed with their diſputes. The fierceneſs of Thracians and Scythians is now ſoftened by the gentle ſound of the goſpel; and every where Chriſt is all in all."[c] Were therefore the motives of Conſtantine's converſion ever ſo problematical, the eaſy eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, and the ruin of heatheniſm under him and his immediate ſucceſſors, is of itſelf a proof of the progreſs which Chriſtianity had made in the preceding period. It may be added alſo, "that Maxentius, the rival of Conſtantine, had ſhown himſelf friendly to the Chriſtians. Therefore, of thoſe who were contending for worldly power and empire, one



[a] De Error. Profan. Relig. c. 21. p. 172. Quoted by Lardner, vol. VIII. p. 262.

[b] Jer. ad Lect. ep. 57. [c] Jer. ep. 8. ad Heliod.

actually favoured and flattered them, and another may be ſuſpected to have joined himſelf to them, partly from conſideration of intereſt; ſo conſiderable were they become, under external diſadvantages of all ſorts."[a] This at leaſt is certain, that throughout the whole tranſaction hitherto, the great ſeemed to follow, not to lead the public opinion.

It may help to convey to us ſome notion of the extent and progreſs of Chriſtianity, or rather of the character and quality of many early Chriſtians, of their learning and their labours, to notice the number of Chriſtian *writers* who flouriſhed in theſe ages. St. Jerome's catalogue contains *ſixty-ſix* writers within the three firſt centuries, and the ſix firſt years of the fourth; and *fifty-four* between that time and his own, viz. A. D. 392. Jerome introduces his catalogue with the following juſt remonſtrance:—"Let thoſe, who ſay the church has had no philoſophers, nor eloquent and learned men, obſerve who and what they were, who founded, eſtabliſhed, and adorned it; let them ceaſe to accuſe our faith of ruſticity, and confeſs their miſtake."[b] Of theſe writers, ſeveral, as Juſtin, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Bardeſanes, Hippolitus, Euſebius, were voluminous writers. Chriſtian writers abounded particularly about the year 178. Alexander, biſhop of Jeruſalem, founded a library in that city A. D. 212. Pamphilus, the friend of Origen, founded a library at Ceſarea, A. D. 294. Public defences were alſo ſet forth, by various advocates of the religion, in the courſe of its three firſt centuries. Within one hundred years after Chriſt's aſcenſion, Quadratus and Ariſtides, whoſe works, except ſome few fragments of the firſt, are loſt; and about twenty years afterwards, Juſtin Martyr, whoſe works remain, preſented apologies for the Chriſtian religion to the Roman emperors; Quadratus and Ariſtides to Adrian, Juſtin to Antoninus Pius, and a ſecond to Marcus Antoninus. Melito, biſhop of Sardis, and Apollinaris, biſhop of Hierapolis, and Miltiades, men of great reputation,

[a] Lardner, vol. VII. p. 380.

[b] Jer. Prol. in lib. de ſer. ecc.

utation, did the ſame to Marcus Antoninus twenty years afterwards :[a] and ten years after this, Apollonius, who ſuffered martyrdom under the emperor Commodus, compoſed an apology for his faith, which he read in the ſenate, and which was afterwards publiſhed.[b] Fourteen years after the apology of Apollonius, Tertullian addreſſed the work, which now remains under that name, to the governors of provinces in the Roman empire; and, about the ſame time, Minucius Felix compoſed a defence of the Chriſtian religion, which is ſtill extant; and, ſhortly after the concluſion of this century, copious defences of Chriſtianity were publiſhed by Arnobius and Lactantius.

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## SECT. II.

### *Reflections upon the preceding Account.*

IN viewing the progreſs of Chriſtianity, our firſt attention is due to the number of converts at Jeruſalem, immediately after its founder's death; becauſe this ſucceſs was a ſucceſs at the *time*, and upon the *ſpot*, when and where the chief part of the hiſtory had been tranſacted.

We are, in the next place, called upon to attend to the early eſtabliſhment of numerous Chriſtian ſocieties in Judea and Galilee, which countries had been the ſcene of Chriſt's miracles and miniſtry, and where the memory of what had paſſed, and the knowledge of what was alleged, muſt have yet been freſh and certain.

We are, thirdly, invited to recollect the ſucceſs of the apoſtles and of their companions, at the ſeveral places to which they came, both within and without Judea; becauſe it was the credit given to original witneſſes, appealing for the truth of their accounts to what themſelves had ſeen and

[a] Euſeb. Hiſt. l. iv. c. 26. See alſo Lardner, vol. II. p. 666.

[b] Lard. vol. II. p. 687.

and heard. The effect alſo of their preaching, ſtrongly confirms the truth of what our hiſtory poſitively and circumſtantially relates, that they were able to exhibit to their hearers ſupernatural atteſtations of their miſſion.

We are, laſtly, to conſider the *ſubſequent* growth and ſpread of the religion, of which we receive ſucceſſive intimations, and ſatisfactory, though general and occaſional accounts, until its full and final eſtabliſhment.

In all theſe ſeveral ſtages, the hiſtory is without a parallel; for it muſt be obſerved, that we have not now been tracing the progreſs, and deſcribing the prevalency, of an opinion, founded upon philoſophical or critical arguments, upon mere deductions of reaſon, or the conſtruction of ancient writings, (of which kind are the ſeveral theories which have, at different times, gained poſſeſſion of the public mind in various departments of ſcience and literature; and of one or other of which kind are the tenets alſo which divide the various ſects of Chriſtianity) but that we ſpeak of a ſyſtem, the very baſis and poſtulatum of which, was a ſupernatural character aſcribed to a particular perſon; of a doctrine, the truth whereof depended entirely upon the truth of a matter of fact then recent. "To eſtabliſh a new religion, even amongſt a few people, or in one ſingle nation, is a thing in itſelf exceedingly difficult. To reform ſome corruptions which may have ſpread in a religion, or to make new regulations in it, is not perhaps ſo hard, when the main and principal parts of that religion are preſerved entire and unſhaken; and yet this very often cannot be accompliſhed, without an extraordinary concurrence of circumſtances, and may be attempted a thouſand times without ſucceſs. But to introduce a new faith, a new way of thinking and acting, and to perſuade many nations to quit the religion in which their anceſtors had lived and died, which had been delivered down to them from time immemorial, to make them forſake and deſpiſe the deities which they had been accuſtomed to reverence and worſhip; this is a work of ſtill greater difficulty."[a] The reſiſtance of education,

[a] Jortin's Diſ. on the Chriſt. Rel. p. 107. ed. IV.

tion, worldly policy, and ſuperſtition, is almoſt invincible."

If men, in theſe days, be Chriſtians in conſequence of their education, in ſubmiſſion to authority, or in compliance with faſhion, let us recollect that it was not ſo from the beginning. The firſt race of Chriſtians, as well as millions who ſucceeded them, became ſuch in formal oppoſition to all theſe motives, to the whole power and ſtrength of this influence. Every argument therefore, and every inſtance, which ſets forth the prejudice of education, and the almoſt irreſiſtible effects of that prejudice (and no perſons are more fond of expatiating upon this ſubject than deiſtical writers) in fact confirms the evidence of Chriſtianity.

But, in order to judge of the argument which is drawn from the early propagation of Chriſtianity, I know no fairer way of proceeding, than to compare what we have ſeen of the ſubject, with the ſucceſs of Chriſtian miſſions in modern ages. In the Eaſt-India miſſion, ſupported by the ſociety for promoting Chriſtian knowledge, we hear ſometimes of thirty, ſometimes of forty, being baptized in the courſe of a year, and theſe principally children. Of converts properly ſo called, that is, of adults voluntarily embracing Chriſtianity, the number is extremely ſmall. "Notwithſtanding the labour of miſſionaries for upwards of two hundred years, and the eſtabliſhments of different Chriſtian nations who ſupport them, there are not twelve thouſand Indian Chriſtians, and thoſe almoſt entirely outcaſts."[a]

I lament, as much as any man, the little progreſs which Chriſtianity has made in theſe countries, and the inconſiderable effect that has followed the labours of its miſſionaries; but I ſee in it a ſtrong proof of the divine origin of the religion. What had the apoſtles to aſſiſt them in propagating Chriſtianity, which the miſſionaries have not? If piety

[a] Sketches relating to the hiſtory, learning, and manners of the Hindoos, p. 48. quoted by Dr. Robertſon. Hiſt. Diſ. concerning ancient India, p. 236.

piety and zeal had been ſufficient, I doubt not but that our miſſionaries poſſeſs theſe qualities in a high degree, for nothing, except piety and zeal, could engage them in the undertaking. If ſanctity of life and manners was the allurement, the conduct of theſe men is unblameable. If the advantage of education and learning be looked to, there is not one of the modern miſſionaries, who is not, in this reſpect, ſuperior to all the apoſtles; and that not only abſolutely, but, what is of more importance, *relatively*, in compariſon, that is, with thoſe amongſt whom they exerciſe their office. If the intrinſic excellency of the religion, the perfection of its morality, the purity of its precepts, the eloquence or tenderneſs or ſublimity of various parts of its writings, were the recommendations by which it made its way, theſe remain the ſame. If the character and circumſtances, under which the preachers were introduced to the countries in which they taught, be accounted of importance, this advantage is all on the ſide of the modern miſſionaries. They come from a country and a people, to which the Indian world look up with ſentiments of deference. The apoſtles came forth amongſt the Gentiles under no other name than that of Jews, which was preciſely the character they deſpiſed and derided. If it be diſgraceful in India to become a Chriſtian, it could not be much leſs ſo to be enrolled amongſt thoſe, "quos per flagitia inviſos, vulgus Chriſtianos appellabat." If the religion which they had to encounter be conſidered, the difference, I apprehend, will not be great. The theology of both was nearly the ſame, "what is ſuppoſed to be performed by the power of Jupiter, of Neptune, of Æolus, of Mars, of Venus, according to the mythology of the Weſt, is aſcribed, in the Eaſt, to the agency of Agrio, the god of fire, Varoon, the god of oceans, Vayoo, the god of wind, Cama, the god of love."[a] The ſacred rites of the weſtern polytheiſm were gay, feſtive and licentious; the rites of the public religion in the Eaſt partake of the ſame character, with

[a] Baghvat Geeta, p. 94. quoted by Dr. Robertſon, Ind. Diſ. p. 306.

with a more avowed indecency. "In every function performed in the pagodas, as well as in every public proceſſion, it is the office of theſe women (i. e. of women prepared by the Brahmins for the purpoſe) to dance before the idols, and to ſing hymns in his praiſe; and it is difficult to ſay, whether they treſpaſs moſt againſt decency by the geſtures they exhibit, or by the verſes which they recite. The walls of the pagodas were covered with paintings in a ſtyle no leſs indelicate."[a b]

On both ſides of the compariſon the popular religion had a ſtrong eſtabliſhment. In ancient Greece and Rome it was ſtrictly incorporated with the ſtate. The magiſtrate was the prieſt. The higheſt offices of government bore the moſt diſtinguiſhed part in the celebration of the public rites. In India, a powerful and numerous caſt poſſeſs excluſively the adminiſtration of the eſtabliſhed worſhip; and are, of conſequence, devoted to its ſervice, and attached to its intereſt. In both, the prevailing mythology was deſtitute of any proper evidence, or rather, in both, the origin of the tradition is run up into ages, long anterior to the exiſtence of credible hiſtory, or of written language. The Indian chronology computes eras by millions of years, and the life of man by thouſands;[c] and in theſe, or prior to theſe, is placed the hiſtory of their divinities. In both, the eſtabliſhed ſuperſtition held the ſame place in the public opinion; that is to ſay, in both it was credited by the bulk of the people,[d] but by the learned and philoſophic

[a] Others of the deities of the Eaſt are of an auſtere and gloomy character, to be propitiated by victims, ſometimes by human ſacrifices, and by voluntary torments of the moſt excruciating kind.

[b] Voyage de Gentil. vol. I. p. 244—260. Preface to Code of Gentoo Laws, p. 57. quoted by Dr. Robertſon, p. 320.

[c] "The Suffec Jogue, or age of purity, is ſaid to have laſted three million two hundred thouſand years, and they hold that the life of man was extended in that age to one hundred thouſand years; but there is a difference amongſt the Indian writers of ſix millions of years in the computation of this era." Ib.

[d] "How abſurd ſoever the articles of faith may be, which ſuperſtition has adopted, or how unhallowed the rites which it preſcribes,

ſophic part of the community, either derided, or regarded by them as only fit to be upholden for the ſake of its political uſes. [a]

Or if it ſhould be allowed, that the ancient heathens believed in their religion leſs generally than the preſent Indians do, I am far from thinking that this circumſtance would afford any facility to the work of the apoſtles, above that of modern miſſionaries. To me it appears, and I think it material to be remarked, that a diſbelief of the eſtabliſhed religion of their country (I do not mean a rejection of ſome of its articles, but a radical diſbelief of the whole) has no tendency to diſpoſe men for the reception of another; but that, on the contrary, it generates a ſettled contempt of all religious pretenſions whatever. General infidelity is the hardeſt ſoil which the propagators of a new religion can have to work upon. Could a Methodiſt

ſcribes, the former are received, in every age and country, with unheſitating aſſent, by the great body of the people, and the latter obſerved with ſcrupulous exactneſs. In our reaſonings concerning opinions and practices, which differ widely from our own, we are extremely apt to err. Having been inſtructed ourſelves in the principles of a religion, worthy, in every reſpect, of that divine wiſdom by which they were dictated, we frequently expreſs wonder at the credulity of nations, in embracing ſyſtems of belief which appear to us ſo directly repugnant to right reaſon; and ſometimes ſuſpect, that tenets ſo wild and extravagant do not really gain credit with them. But experience may ſatisfy us, that neither our wonder nor ſuſpicions are well founded. No article of the public religion was called in queſtion by thoſe people of ancient Europe, with whoſe hiſtory we are beſt acquainted; and no practice, which it enjoined, appeared improper to them. On the other hand, every opinion that tended to diminiſh the reverence of men for the gods of their country, or to alienate them from their worſhip, excited, among the Greeks and Romans, that indignant zeal, which is natural to every people attached to their religion by a firm perſuaſion of its truth." Ind. Dif. p. 321.

[a] That the learned Brahmins of the Eaſt are rational theiſts, and ſecretly reject the eſtabliſhed theory, and contemn the rites that were founded upon them, or rather conſider them as contrivances to be ſupported for their political uſes, ſee Dr. Robertſon's Ind. Dif. p. 324—334.

diſt or Moravian promiſe himſelf a better chance of ſucceſs with a French eſprit fort, who had been accuſtomed to laugh at the popery of his country, than with a believing Mahometan or Hindoo? Or are our modern unbelievers in Chriſtianity for that reaſon in danger of becoming Mahometans or Hindoos? It does not appear that the Jews, who had a body of hiſtorical evidence to offer for their religion, and who at that time undoubtedly entertained and held forth the expectation of a future ſtate, derived any great advantage, as to the extenſion of their ſyſtem, from the diſcredit into which the popular religion had fallen with many of their heathen neighbours.

We have particularly directed our obſervations to the ſtate and progreſs of Chriſtianity amongſt the inhabitants of *India;* but the hiſtory of the Chriſtian miſſion in other countries, where the efficacy of the miſſion is left ſolely to the conviction wrought by the preaching of ſtrangers, preſents the ſame idea, as the Indian miſſion does, of the feebleneſs and inadequacy of human means. About twenty-five years ago, was publiſhed in England, a tranſlation from the Dutch of a hiſtory of Greenland, and a relation of the miſſion, for above thirty years carried on in that country, by the Unitas Fratrum, or Moravians. Every part of that relation confirms the opinion we have ſtated. Nothing could ſurpaſs, or hardly equal, the zeal and patience of the miſſionaries. Yet their hiſtorian, in the concluſion of his narrative, could find place for no reflections more encouraging than the following:—"A perſon that had known the heathen, that had ſeen the little benefit from the great pains hitherto taken with them, and conſidered that one after another had abandoned all hopes of the converſion of thoſe infidels: (and ſome thought they would never be converted, till they ſaw miracles wrought as in the apoſtles' days, and this the Greenlanders expected and demanded of their inſtructors) one that conſidered this, I ſay, would not much wonder at the paſt unfruitfulneſs of theſe young beginners, as at their ſtedfaſt perſeverance in the midſt of nothing but diſtreſs, difficulties and

impediments, internally and externally; and that they never deſponded of the converſion of thoſe poor creatures amidſt all ſeeming impoſſibilities."[a]

From the widely diſproportionate effects, which attend the preaching of modern miſſionaries of Chriſtianity, compared with what followed the miniſtry of Chriſt and his apoſtles, under circumſtances either alike, or not ſo unlike as to account for the difference, a concluſion is fairly drawn, in ſupport of what our hiſtories deliver concerning them, that they poſſeſſed means of conviction, which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to, which we want.

[a] Hiſt. of Greenland, vol. II. p. 376.

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## SECT. III.

### *Of the Religion of Mahomet.*

THE only event in the hiſtory of the human ſpecies, which admits of compariſon with the propagation of Chriſtianity, is the ſucceſs of Mahometaniſm. The Mahometan inſtitution was rapid in its progreſs, was recent in its hiſtory, and was founded upon a ſupernatural or prophetic character aſſumed by its author. In theſe articles the reſemblance with Chriſtianity is confeſſed. But there are points of difference, which ſeparate, we apprehend, the two caſes entirely.

I. Mahomet did not found his pretenſions upon miracles, properly ſo called; that is, upon proofs of ſupernatural agency, capable of being known and atteſted by others. Chriſtians are warranted in this aſſertion by the evidence of the Koran, in which Mahomet not only does not affect the power of working miracles, but expreſsly diſclaims it. The following paſſages of that book furniſh direct proofs of the truth of what we allege:—"The infidels ſay, Unleſs a ſign be ſent down unto him from his lord,

lord, we will not believe; thou art a preacher only."[a] Again, "nothing hindered us from ſending *thee* with miracles, except that the former nations have charged them with impoſture."[b] And laſtly, "they ſay, Unleſs a ſign be ſent down unto him from his lord, we will not believe; anſwer, Signs are in the power of God alone, and I am no more than a public preacher. Is it not ſufficient for them, that we have ſent down unto them the book of the Koran to be read unto them?"[c] Beſide theſe acknowledgments, I have obſerved *thirteen* diſtinct places, in which Mahomet puts the objection (unleſs a ſign, &c.) into the mouth of the unbeliever, in not one of which does he allege a miracle in reply. His anſwer is, "that God giveth the power of working miracles when and to whom he pleaſeth;"[d] "that if he ſhould work miracles, they would not believe;"[e] "that they had before rejected Moſes, and Jeſus, and the prophets, who wrought miracles;"[f] "that the Koran itſelf was a miracle."[g]

The only place in the Koran, in which it can be pretended that a ſenſible miracle is referred to (for I do not allow the ſecret viſitations of Gabriel, the night journey of Mahomet to heaven, or the preſence in battle of inviſible hoſts of angels, to deſerve the name of *ſenſible* miracles) is the beginning of the fifty-fourth chapter. The words are theſe—"The hour of judgment approacheth, *and the moon hath been ſplit in ſunder*, but if the unbelievers ſee a ſign, they turn aſide, ſaying, This is a powerful charm." The Mahometan expoſitors diſagree in their interpretation of this paſſage; ſome explaining it to be a mention of the ſplitting of the moon, as one of the future ſigns of the approach of the day of judgment; others referring it to a miraculous appearance which had then taken place.[h] It ſeems to me not improbable, that Mahomet may have taken advantage of ſome extraordinary halo, or other unuſual

[a] Sale's Koran, c. xiii. p. 201. ed. quarto.
[b] c. xvii. p. 232. [c] Ib. c. xxix. p. 328.
[d] c. v. x. xiii. twice. [e] c. vi. [f] c. iii. xxi. xxviii.
[g] c. xvi. [h] Vide Sale in loc.

uſual appearance of the moon, which had happened about this time; and which ſupplied a foundation both for this paſſage, and for the ſtory which in after times had been raiſed out of it.

After this more than ſilence; after theſe authentic *confeſſions* of the Koran, we are not to be moved with miraculous ſtories related of Mahomet by Abulfeda, who wrote his life above ſix hundred years after his death, or which are found in the legend of Al Jannabi, who came two hundred years later.[a]

On the contrary, from comparing what Mahomet himſelf wrote and ſaid, with what was afterwards reported of him by his followers, the plain and fair concluſion is, that, when the religion was eſtabliſhed by conqueſt, then, and not till then, came out the ſtories of his miracles.

Now this difference alone conſtitutes, in my opinion, a bar to all reaſoning from one caſe to the other. The ſucceſs of a religion founded upon a miraculous hiſtory, ſhows the credit which was given to the hiſtory; and this credit, under the circumſtances in which it was given, i. e. by perſons capable of knowing the truth, and intereſted to inquire after it, is evidence of the reality of the hiſtory, and, by conſequence, of the truth of the religion. Where a miraculous hiſtory is not alleged, no part of this argument can be applied. We admit that multitudes acknowledged the pretenſions of Mahomet; but theſe pretenſions being deſtitute of miraculous evidence, we know that the grounds upon which they were acknowledged, could not be ſecure grounds of perſuaſion to his followers, nor their example any authority to us. Admit the whole of Mahomet's authentic hiſtory, ſo far as it was of a nature capable of being known or witneſſed by others, to be true, (which is certainly

[a] It does not, I think, appear, that theſe hiſtorians had any written accounts to appeal to more ancient than the Sonnah, which was a collection of traditions, made by order of the Caliphs, two hundred years after Mahomet's death. Mahomet died A. D. 632; Al. Bochari, one of the ſix doctors who compiled the Sonnah, was born A. D. 809, died 869. Prideaux's Life of Mahomet, p. 192. ed. 7th.

ly to admit all that the reception of the religion can be brought to prove) and Mahomet might ſtill be an impoſtor, or enthuſiaſt, or an union of both. Admit to be true almoſt any part of Chriſt's hiſtory, of that, I mean, which was public, and within the cognizance of his followers, and he muſt have come from God. Where matter of fact is not in queſtion, where miracles are not alleged, I do not ſee that the progreſs of a religion is a better argument of its truth, than the prevalency of any ſyſtem of opinion in natural religion, morality, or phyſics, is a proof of the truth of thoſe opinions. And we know that this ſort of argument is inadmiſſible in any branch of philoſophy whatever.

But it will be ſaid, If one religion could make its way without miracles, why might not another? To which I reply, firſt, That this is not the queſtion: the proper queſtion is not, whether a religious inſtitution could be ſet up without miracles, but whether a religion, or a change of religion, founding itſelf in miracles, could ſucceed without any reality to reſt upon. I apprehend theſe two caſes to be very different; and I apprehend Mahomet's not taking this courſe to be one proof, amongſt others, that the thing is difficult, if not impoſſible, to be accompliſhed: certainly it was not from an unconſciouſneſs of the value and importance of miraculous evidence, for it is very obſervable, that in the ſame volume, and ſometimes in the ſame chapters, in which Mahomet ſo repeatedly diſclaims the power of working miracles himſelf, he is inceſſantly referring to the miracles of preceding prophets. One would imagine, to hear ſome men talk, or to read ſome books, that the ſetting up of a religion by dint of miraculous pretences was a thing of every day's experience; whereas I believe, that, except the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religion, there is no tolerably well authenticated account of any ſuch thing having been accompliſhed.

II. Secondly, the eſtabliſhment of Mahomet's religion was effected by cauſes, which, in no degree, appertained to the origin of Chriſtianity.

During the firſt twelve years of his miſſion, Mahomet had recourſe only to perſuaſion. This is allowed. And there is ſufficient reaſon from the effect to believe, that if he had confined himſelf to this mode of propagating his religion, we of the preſent day ſhould never have heard either of him or it. "Three years were ſilently employed in the converſion of *fourteen* proſelytes. For ten years the religion advanced with a ſlow and painful progreſs within the walls of Mecca. The number of proſelytes in the ſeventh year of his miſſion may be eſtimated by the abſence of *eighty-three* men and eighteen women, who retired to Ethiopia.[a] Yet this progreſs, ſuch as it was, appears to have been aided by ſome very important advantages, which Mahomet found in his ſituation, in his mode of conducting his deſign, and in his doctrine.

1. Mahomet was the grandſon of the moſt powerful and honourable family in Mecca; and although the early death of his father had not left him a patrimony ſuitable to his birth, he had, long before the commencement of his miſſion, repaired this deficiency by an opulent marriage. A perſon conſiderable by his wealth, of high deſcent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon himſelf the character of a religious teacher, would not fail of attracting attention and followers.

2. Mahomet conducted his deſign, in the outſet eſpecially, with great art and prudence. He conducted it as a politician would conduct a plot. His firſt application was to his own family. This gained him his wife's uncle, a conſiderable perſon in Mecca, together with his couſin Ali, afterwards the celebrated Caliph, then a youth of great expectation, and even already diſtinguiſhed by his attachment, impetuoſity and courage.[b] He next addreſſed himſelf

[a] Gibbon's Hiſt. vol. IX. p. 244. et ſeq. ed. Dub.

[b] Of which Mr. Gibbon has preſerved the following ſpecimen: —"When Mahomet called out in an aſſembly of his family, who among you will be my companion, and my vizir? Ali, then only in the fourteenth year of his age, ſuddenly replied, O prophet,

ſelf to Abu Becr, a man amongſt the firſt of the Koreiſh in wealth and influence. The intereſt and example of Abu Becr drew in five other principal perſons in Mecca, whoſe ſolicitations prevailed upon five more of the ſame rank. This was the work of three years, during which time every thing was tranſacted in ſecret. Upon the ſtrength of theſe allies, and under the powerful protection of his family, who, however ſome of them might diſapprove his enterpriſe, or deride his pretenſions, would not ſuffer the orphan of their houſe, the relict of their favourite brother, to be inſulted,—Mahomet now commenced his public preaching. And the advance which he made, during the nine or ten remaining years of his peaceable miniſtry, was by no means greater than what, with theſe advantages, and with the additional and ſingular circumſtance of there being no *eſtabliſhed* religion at Mecca at that time to contend with, might reaſonably have been expected. How ſoon his primitive adherents were let into the ſecret of his views of empire, or in what ſtage of his undertaking theſe views firſt opened themſelves to his own mind, it is not now eaſy to determine. The event however was, that theſe his firſt proſelytes all ultimately attained to riches and honours, to the command of armies, and the government of kingdoms.[a]

3. The Arabs deduced their deſcent from Abraham through the line of Iſhmael. The inhabitants of Mecca, in common probably with the other Arabian tribes, acknowledged, as, I think, may clearly be collected from the Koran, one ſupreme Deity, but had aſſociated with him many objects of idolatrous worſhip. The great doctrine, with which Mahomet ſet out, was the ſtrict and excluſive unity of God. Abraham, he told them, their illuſtrious anceſtor; Iſhmael, the father of their nation; Moſes, the law-giver of the Jews; and Jeſus, the author of Chriſtianity,

et, I am the man; whoſoever riſes againſt thee, I will daſh out his teeth, tear out his eyes, break his legs, rip up his belly. O prophet, I will be thy vizir over them." Vol. IX. p. 245.

[a] Gib. vol. IX. p. 244.

ity, had all aſſerted the ſame thing; that their followers had univerſally corrupted the truth, and that *he* was now commiſſioned to reſtore it to the world. Was it to be wondered at, that a doctrine ſo ſpecious, and authoriſed by names, ſome or other of which were holden in the higheſt veneration by every deſcription of his hearers, ſhould, in the hands of a popular miſſionary, prevail to the extent in which Mahomet ſucceeded by his pacific miniſtry.

4. Of the inſtitution which Mahomet joined with this fundamental doctrine, and of the Koran in which that inſtitution is delivered, we diſcover, I think, two purpoſes that pervade the whole, viz. to make converts, and to make his converts ſoldiers. The following particulars, amongſt others, may be conſidered as pretty evident indications of theſe deſigns:

1. When Mahomet began to preach, his addreſs to the Jews, the Chriſtians, and to the Pagan Arabs, was, that the religion which he taught, was no other than what had been originally their own. "We believe in God, and that which hath been ſent down unto us, and that which hath been ſent down unto Abraham, and Iſhmael, and Iſaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which was delivered unto Moſes and Jeſus, and that which was delivered unto the prophets from their Lord; we make no diſtinction between any of them."[a] "He hath ordained you the religion which he commanded Noah, and which we have revealed unto thee, O Mohammed, and which we commanded Abraham and Moſes and Jeſus, ſaying, Obſerve this religion, and be not divided therein."[b] "He hath choſen you, and hath not impoſed on you any difficulty in the religion which he hath given you, the religion of your father Abraham."[c]

2. The author of the Koran never ceaſes from deſcribing the future anguiſh of unbelievers, their deſpair, regret, penitence and torment. It is the point which he labours above

[a] Sale's Koran, c. ii. p. 17. [b] Ib. c. xlii. p. 393.
[c] Ib. c. xxii. p. 281.

above all others. And theſe deſcriptions are conceived in terms, which will appear in no ſmall degree impreſſive, even to the modern reader of an Engliſh tranſlation. Doubtleſs they would operate with much greater force upon the minds of thoſe to whom they were immediately directed. The terror which they ſeem well calculated to inſpire, would be to many tempers a powerful application.

3. On the other hand, his voluptuous paradiſe; his robes of ſilk, his palaces of marble, his rivers and ſhades, his groves and couches, his wines, his dainties; and, above all, his ſeventy-two virgins aſſigned to each of the faithful, of reſplendent beauty and eternal youth; intoxicated the imaginations, and ſeized the paſſions of his Eaſtern followers.

4. But Mahomet's higheſt heaven was reſerved for thoſe, who fought his battles, or expended their fortunes in his cauſe. "Thoſe believers who ſit ſtill at home, not having any hurt, and thoſe who employ their fortunes and their perſons for the religion of God, ſhall not be held equal. God hath preferred thoſe who employ their fortunes and their perſons in that cauſe, to a degree above thoſe who ſit at home. God hath indeed promiſed every one paradiſe, but God hath preferred thoſe who *fight for the faith*, before thoſe who ſit ſtill, by adding unto them a great reward; by degrees of honour conferred upon them from him, and by granting them forgiveneſs and mercy."[a] Again, "Do ye reckon the giving drink to the pilgrims, and the viſiting of the holy temple, to be actions as meritorious as thoſe performed by him who believeth in God and the laſt day, and *fighteth for the religion of God?* they ſhall not be held equal with God. They who have believed, and fled their country, and employed their ſubſtance and their perſons in the defence of God's true religion, ſhall be in the higheſt degree of honour with God; and theſe are they who ſhall be happy. The Lord ſendeth them good tidings of mercy from him, and good will, and of gardens wherein they ſhall enjoy laſting pleaſures.

[a] Ib. c. iv. p. 73.

pleaſures. They ſhall continue therein forever, for with God is a great reward."[a] And, once more, "Verily God hath purchaſed of the true believers their ſouls and their ſubſtance, promiſing them the enjoyment of paradiſe, on condition that they *fight for the cauſe of God*, whether they ſlay or be ſlain, the promiſe for the ſame is aſſuredly due by the law and the goſpel and the Koran."[b c]

5. His doctrine of predeſtination was applicable, and was applied by him, to the ſame purpoſe of fortifying and of exalting the courage of his adherents. "If any thing of the matter had happened unto us, we had not been ſlain here. Anſwer, if ye had been in your houſes, verily they would have gone forth to fight, whoſe ſlaughter was decreed to the places where they died."[d]

6. In warm regions, the appetite of the ſexes is ardent, the paſſion for inebriating liquors moderate. In compliance with this diſtinction, although Mahomet laid a reſtraint upon the drinking of wine, in the uſe of women he allowed an almoſt unbounded indulgence. Four wives, with the liberty of changing them at pleaſure,[e] together with the perſons of all his captives,[f] was an irreſiſtible bribe to an Arabian warrior. "God is minded," ſays he, ſpeaking of this very ſubject, "to make his religion light unto you, for man was created weak." How different this from the unaccomodating purity of the goſpel? How would Mahomet have ſucceeded with the Chriſtian leſſon in his mouth, "Whoſoever looketh after a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." It muſt be added, that Mahomet did not venture upon the prohibition of wine, till the fourth year of the Hegira.

[a] Ib. c. ix. p. 151. [b] Ib. p. 164.

[c] "The ſword (ſaith Mahomet) is the key of heaven and of hell; a drop of blood ſhed in the cauſe of God, a night ſpent in arms, is of more avail than two months of faſting or prayer. Whoſoever falls in battle, his ſins are forgiven at the day of judgment; his wounds ſhall be reſplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as muſk, and the loſs of his limbs ſhall be ſupplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." Gibb. vol. IX. p. 256.

[d] C. iii. p. 54. [e] C. iv. p. 63. [f] Gibb. p. 255.

Hegira, or the ſeventeenth of his miſſion,[a] when his military ſucceſſes had completely eſtabliſhed his authority. The ſame obſervation holds of the faſt of the Ramadan,[b] and of the moſt laborious part of his inſtitution, the pilgrimage to Mecca.[c]

What has hitherto been collected from the records of the Muſſulman hiſtory, relates to the twelve or thirteen years of Mahomet's peaceable preaching, which part alone of his life and enterpriſe admits of the ſmalleſt compariſon with the origin of Chriſtianity. A new ſcene is now unfolded. The city of Medina, diſtant about ten days journey from Mecca, was at that time diſtracted by the hereditary contentions of two hoſtile tribes. Theſe feuds were exaſperated by the mutual perſecutions of the Jews and Chriſtians, and of the different Chriſtian ſects by which the city was inhabited.[d] The religion of Mahomet preſented, in ſome meaſure, a point of union or compromiſe to theſe divided opinions. It embraced the principles which were common to them all. Each party ſaw in it an honourable acknowledgment of the fundamental truth of their own ſyſtem. To the Pagan Arab, ſomewhat imbued with the ſentiments and knowledge of his Jewiſh or Chriſtian fellow-citizen, it offered no offenſive or very improbable theology. This recommendation procured to Mahometaniſm a more favourable reception at Medina, than its author had been able, by twelve years painful endeavours, to obtain for it at Mecca. Yet, after all, the progreſs of the religion was inconſiderable. His miſſionary could only collect a congregation of forty perſons.[e] It was not a religious, but a political aſſociation, which ultimately introduced Mahomet into Medina. Harraſſed, as it ſhould ſeem, and diſguſted by the long continuance of

[a] Mod. Un. Hiſt. vol. I. p. 126. [b] Ib. p. 112.

[c] This latter, however, already prevailed amongſt the Arabs, and had grown out of their exceſſive veneration for the Caaba. Mahomet's law, in this reſpect, was rather a compliance than an innovation.*

[d] Mod. Un. Hiſt. vol. I. p. 100. [e] Ib. p. 85.

* *Sale's Prolim. p.* 122.

of factions and diſputes, the inhabitants of that city ſaw in the admiſſion of the prophet's authority, a reſt from the miſeries which they had ſuffered, and a ſuppreſſion of the violence and fury which they had learnt to condemn. After an embaſſy therefore, compoſed of believers and unbelievers,[a] and of perſons of both tribes, with whom a treaty was concluded of ſtrict alliance and ſupport, Mahomet made his public entry, and was received as the ſovereign of Medina.

From this time, or ſoon after this time, the impoſtor changed his language and his conduct. Having now a town at his command, where to arm his party, and to head them with ſecurity, he enters upon new counſels. He now pretends that a divine commiſſion is given to him to attack the infidels, to deſtroy idolatry, and to ſet up the true faith by the ſword.[b] An early victory over a very ſuperior force, achieved by conduct and bravery, eſtabliſhed the renown of his arms, and of his perſonal character.[c] Every year after this was marked by battles or aſſaſſinations. The nature and activity of Mahomet's future exertions may be eſtimated from the computation, that, in the nine following years of his life, he commanded his army in perſon in eight general engagements,[d] and undertook, by himſelf or his lieutenants, fifty military enterpriſes.

From this time we have nothing left to account for, but that Mahomet ſhould collect an army, that his army ſhould conquer, and that his religion ſhould proceed together with his conqueſts. The ordinary experience of human affairs, leaves us little to wonder at, in any of theſe effects; and they were likewiſe each aſſiſted by peculiar facilities. From all ſides, the roving Arabs crowded around the ſtandard of religion and plunder, of freedom and victory, of arms and rapine. Beſide the highly painted joys of a carnal paradiſe, Mahomet rewarded his followers in this world with a liberal diviſion of the ſpoils, and

[a] Ib. p. 85. [b] Ib. p. 88.
[c] Victory of Bedr. ib. p. 106. [d] Un. Hiſt. vol. I. p. 255.

and with the perſons of their female captives.[a] The condition of Arabia, occupied by ſmall independent tribes, expoſed it to the impreſſion, and yielded to the progreſs of a firm and reſolute army. After the reduction of his native peninſula, the weakneſs alſo of the Roman provinces on the North and the Weſt, as well as the diſtracted ſtate of the Perſian empire on the Eaſt, facilitated the ſucceſsful invaſion of neighbouring countries. That Mahomet's conqueſts ſhould carry his religion along with them, will excite little ſurpriſe, when we know the conditions which he propoſed to the vanquiſhed. Death or converſion was the only choice offered to idolaters. "Strike off their heads; ſtrike off all the ends of their fingers:[b] kill the idolaters, whereſoever ye ſhall find them."[c] To the Jews and Chriſtians was left the ſomewhat milder alternative, of ſubjection and tribute, if they perſiſted in their own religion, or of an equal participation in the rights and liberty, the honours and privileges, of the faithful, if they embraced the religion of their conquerors. "Ye Chriſtian dogs, you know your option; the Koran, the tribute, or the ſword."[d] The corrupt ſtate of Chriſtianity in the ſeventh century, and the contentions of its ſects, unhappily ſo fell in with men's care of their ſafety, or their fortunes, as to induce many to forſake its profeſſion. Add to all which, that Mahomet's victories not only operated by the natural effect of conqueſt, but that they were conſtantly repreſented, both to his friends and enemies, as divine declarations in his favour. Succeſs was evidence. Proſperity carried with it not only influence but proof. "Ye have already," ſays he, after the battle of Bedr, "had a miracle ſhown you, in two armies which attacked each other; one army fought for God's true religion, but the other were infidels."[e] Again, "*Ye* ſlew not thoſe who were ſlain at Bedr, but God ſlew them. If ye deſire

[a] Gibb. vol. IX. p. 255.
[b] Sale's Koran, c. viii. p. 140. [c] Ib. c. ix. p. 149.
[d] Gibb. ib. p. 337. [e] Sale's Kor. c. iii. p. 36.

ſire a deciſion of the matter between us, now hath a deciſion come unto you."[a]

Many more paſſages might be collected out of the Koran to the ſame effect. But they are unneceſſary. The ſucceſs of Mahometiſm during this, and indeed every future period of its hiſtory, bears ſo little reſemblance to the early propagation of Chriſtianity, that no inference whatever can juſtly be drawn from it to the prejudice of the Chriſtian argument. For what are we comparing? A Galilean peaſant, accompanied by a few fiſhermen, with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jeſus, without force, without power, without ſupport, without one external circumſtance of attraction or influence, prevailing againſt the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy of his country, againſt the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philoſophy, the wiſdom, the authority of of the Roman empire, in the moſt poliſhed and enlightened period of its exiſtence, with Mahomet making his way amongſt Arabs; collecting followers in the midſt of conqueſts and triumphs, in the darkeſt ages and countries of the world, and when ſucceſs in arms not only operated by that command of men's wills and perſons which attends proſperous undertakings, but was conſidered as a ſure teſtimony of divine approbation. That multitudes, perſuaded by this argument, ſhould join the train of a victorious chief; that ſtill greater multitudes ſhould, without any argument, bow down before irreſiſtible power, is a conduct in which we cannot ſee much to ſurpriſe us: in which we can ſee nothing that reſembles the cauſes, by which the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity was effected.

The ſucceſs therefore of Mahometaniſm ſtands not in the way of this important concluſion, that the propagation of Chriſtianity, in the manner and under the circumſtances in which it was propagated, is an *unique* in the hiſtory of the ſpecies. A Jewiſh peaſant overthrew the religion of the world.

I have,

[a] Ch. viii. p. 141.

I have, nevertheleſs, placed the prevalency of the religion amongſt the auxiliary arguments of its truth; becauſe, whether it had prevailed or not, or whether its prevalency can or cannot be accounted for, the direct argument remains ſtill. It is ſtill true, that a great number of men upon the ſpot, perſonally connected with the hiſtory and with the author of the religion, were induced by what they heard and ſaw and knew, not only to change their former opinions, but to give up their time, and ſacrifice their eaſe, to traverſe ſeas and kingdoms without reſt and without wearineſs, to commit themſelves to extreme dangers, to undertake inceſſant toils, to undergo grievous ſufferings, and all this, ſolely in conſequence, and in ſupport of their belief of facts, which, if true, eſtabliſh the truth of the religion, which, if falſe, they muſt have known to be ſo.

PART

# PART THE THIRD.

## A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

### CHAP. I.

*The Diſcrepancies between the ſeveral Goſpels.*

I KNOW not a more raſh or unphiloſophical conduct of the underſtanding, than to reject the ſubſtance of a ſtory, by reaſon of ſome diverſity in the circumſtances with which it is related. The uſual character of human teſtimony is ſubſtantial truth under circumſtantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of juſtice teaches. When accounts of a tranſaction come from the mouths of different witneſſes, it is ſeldom that it is not poſſible to pick out apparent or real inconſiſtencies between them. Theſe inconſiſtencies are ſtudiouſly diſplayed by an adverſe pleader, but oftentimes with little impreſſion upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a cloſe and minute agreement induces the ſuſpicion of confederacy and fraud. When written hiſtories touch upon the ſame ſcenes of action, the compariſon almoſt always affords ground for a like reflection. Numerous, and ſometimes important, variations preſent themſelves; not ſeldom alſo, abſolute and final contradictions; yet neither one nor the other are deemed ſufficient to ſhake the credibility of the main fact. The embaſſy of the Jews to deprecate the execution of Claudian's order to place his ſtatue in their temple, Philo places in harveſt, Joſephus in ſeed-time; both contemporary writers. No reader is led by this inconſiſtency to doubt, whether ſuch an embaſſy was ſent,

ſent, or whether ſuch an order was given. Our own hiſtory ſupplies examples of the ſame kind. In the account of the Marquis of Argyle's death in the reign of Charles the Second, we have a very remarkable contradiction. Lord Clarendon relates that he was condemned to be hanged, which was performed the ſame day: on the contrary, Burnet, Woodrow, Heath, Echard, agree that he was beheaded; and that he was condemned upon the Saturday, and executed upon the Monday.[a] Was any reader of Engliſh hiſtory ever ſceptic enough, to raiſe from hence a queſtion, whether the Marquis of Argyle was executed or not? Yet this ought to be left in uncertainty, according to the principles upon which the Chriſtian hiſtory has ſometimes been attacked. Dr. Middleton contended, that the different hours of the day aſſigned to the crucifixion of Chriſt by John and by the other evangeliſts, did not admit of the reconcilement which learned men had propoſed; and then concludes the diſcuſſion with this hard remark: "We muſt be forced, with ſeveral of the critics, to leave the difficulty juſt as we found it, chargeable with all the conſequences of manifeſt inconſiſtency."[b] But what are theſe conſequences? by no means the diſcrediting of the hiſtory as to the principal fact, by a repugnancy (even ſuppoſing that repugnancy not to be reſolvable into different modes of computation) in the time of the day, in which it is ſaid, to have taken place.

A great deal of the diſcrepancy obſervable in the goſpels, ariſes from *omiſſion;* from a fact or a paſſage of Chriſt's life being noticed by one writer, which is unnoticed by another. Now omiſſion is at all times a very uncertain ground of objection. We perceive it, not only in the compariſon of different writers, but even in the ſame writer, when compared with himſelf. There are a great many particulars, and ſome of them of importance, mentioned by Joſephus in his Antiquities, which, as we ſhould have



[a] See Biog. Britan.

[b] Middleton's Reflections anſwered by Benſon. Hiſt. Chriſ. vol. III. p. 50.

ſuppoſed, ought to have been put down by him in their place in his Jewiſh wars.[a] Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio Caſſius, have, all three, written of the reign of Tiberius. Each has mentioned many things omitted by the reſt,[b] yet no objection is from thence taken to the reſpective credit of their hiſtories. We have in our own times, if there were not ſomething indecorous in the compariſon, the life of an eminent perſon, written by three of his friends, in which there is very great variety in the incidents ſelected by them, ſome apparent, and perhaps ſome real contradictions; yet without any impeachment of the ſubſtantial truth of their accounts, of the authenticity of the books, the competent information or general fidelity of the writers.

But theſe diſcrepancies will be ſtill more numerous, when men do not write hiſtories, but *memoirs*; which is perhaps the true name, and proper deſcription of our goſpels: that is, when they do not undertake, or ever meant to deliver, in order of time, a regular and complete account of *all* the things of importance, which the perſon, who is the ſubject of their hiſtory, did or ſaid; but only, out of many ſimilar ones, to give ſuch paſſages, or ſuch actions and diſcourſes, as offered themſelves more immediately to their attention, came in the way of their inquiries, occurred to their recollection, or were ſuggeſted by their *particular deſign* at the time of writing.

This particular deſign may appear ſometimes, but not always, nor often. Thus I think that the particular deſign, which St. Matthew had in view whilſt he was writing the hiſtory of the reſurrection, was to atteſt the faithful performance of Chriſt's promiſe to his diſciples to go before them into Galilee; becauſe he alone, except Mark, who ſeems to have taken it from him, has recorded this promiſe, and he alone has confined his narrative to that ſingle appearance to the diſciples which fulfilled it. It was the preconcerted, the great and moſt public manifeſtation of our Lord's perſon. It was the thing which dwelt upon St. Matthew's mind, and he adapted his narrative to it.

[a] Lard. part. I. vol. II. p. 755, et ſeq. [b] Ib. p. 743.

it. But, that there is nothing in St. Matthew's language, which negatives other appearances, or which imports that this his appearance to his diſciples in Galilee, in purſuance of his promiſe, was his firſt or only appearance, is made pretty evident by St. Mark's goſpel, which uſed the ſame terms concerning the appearance in Galilee as St. Matthew uſes, yet itſelf records two other appearances prior to this; "Go your way, tell his diſciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee, then ſhall ye ſee him as he ſaid unto you." (xvi. 7) We might be apt to infer from theſe words, that this was the firſt time they were to ſee him: at leaſt, we might infer it, with as much reaſon as we draw the inference from the ſame words in Matthew: yet the hiſtorian himſelf did not perceive that he was leading his readers to any ſuch concluſion, for, in the twelfth and two following verſes of this chapter, he informs us of two appearances, which, by comparing the order of events, are ſhewn to have been prior to the appearance in Galilee. "He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country; and they went and told it unto the reſidue, neither believed they them: afterwards he appeared unto the eleven, as they ſat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief, becauſe they believed not them that had ſeen him after he was riſen."

Probably the ſame obſervation, concerning the *particular deſign* which guided the hiſtorian, may be of uſe in comparing many other paſſages of the goſpels.

## CHAP. II.

### *Erroneous Opinions imputed to the Apoſtles.*

A SPECIES of candour which is ſhewn towards every other book, is ſometimes refuſed to the ſcriptures; and that is, the placing of a diſtinction between judgment and teſtimony.

teſtimony. We do not uſually queſtion the credit of a writer, by reaſon of any opinion he may have delivered upon ſubjects unconnected with his evidence; and even upon ſubjects connected with his account, or mixed with it in the ſame diſcourſe or writing, we naturally ſeparate facts from opinions, teſtimony from obſervation, narrative from argument.

To apply this equitable conſideration to the Chriſtian records, much controverſy and much objection has been raiſed, concerning the quotations of the Old Teſtament found in the New; ſome of which quotations, it is ſaid, are applied in a ſenſe, and to events, apparently different from that which they bear, and from thoſe to which they belong, in the original. It is probable to my apprehenſion, that many of thoſe quotations were intended by the writers of the New Teſtament as nothing more than *accommodations*. They quoted paſſages of their ſcripture, which ſuited, and fell in with, the occaſion before them, without always undertaking to aſſert, that the occaſion was in the view of the author of the words. Such accommodations of paſſages from old authors, from books eſpecially, which are in every one's hands, are common with writers of all countries; but in none, perhaps, were more to be expected, than in the writings of the Jews, whoſe literature was almoſt entirely confined to their ſcriptures. Thoſe prophecies which are alleged with more ſolemnity, and which are accompanied with a preciſe declaration, that they originally reſpected the event then related, are, I think, truly alleged. But were it otherwiſe; is the judgment of the writers of the New Teſtament, in interpreting paſſages of the Old, or ſometimes, perhaps, in receiving eſtabliſhed interpretations, ſo connected, either with their veracity, or with their means of information concerning what was paſſing in their own times, as that a critical miſtake, even were it clearly made out, ſhould overthrow their hiſtorical credit?—Does it diminiſh it? Has it any thing to do with it?

Another

Another error, imputed to the firſt Chriſtians, was the expected appproach of the day of judgment. I would introduce this objection, by a remark, upon what appears to me a ſomewhat ſimilar example. Our Saviour, ſpeaking to Peter of John, ſaid, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee."[a] Theſe words, we find, had been ſo miſconſtrued, as that "a report" from thence, "went abroad among the brethren, that that diſciple ſhould not die." Suppoſe that this had come down to us amongſt the prevailing opinions of the early Chriſtians, and that the particular circumſtance, from which the miſtake ſprung, had been loſt, (which humanly ſpeaking was moſt likely to have been the caſe) ſome, at this day, would have been ready to regard and quote the error, as an impeachment of the whole Chriſtian ſyſtem. Yet with how little juſtice ſuch a concluſion would have been drawn, or rather ſuch a preſumption taken up, the information which we happen to poſſeſs enables us now to perceive. To thoſe who think that the ſcriptures lead us to believe, that the early Chriſtians, and even the apoſtles, expected the approach of the day of judgment in their own times, the ſame reflection will occur, as that which we have made, with reſpect to the more partial perhaps and temporary, but ſtill no leſs ancient error, concerning the duration of St. John's life. It was an error, it may be likewiſe ſaid, which would effectually hinder thoſe, who entertained it, from acting the part of impoſtors.

The difficulty which attends the ſubject of the preſent chapter, is contained in this queſtion; if we once admit the fallibility of the apoſtolic judgment, where are we to ſtop, or in what can we rely upon it? To which queſtions, as arguing with unbelievers, and as arguing for the ſubſtantial truth of the Chriſtian hiſtory, and for that alone, it is competent to the advocate of Chriſtianity to reply, Give me the apoſtle's teſtimony, and I do not ſtand in need of their judgment; give me the facts, and I have complete ſecurity for every concluſion I want.

But,

[a] John xxi. 23.

But, although I think, that it is competent to the Chriſtian apologiſt to return this anſwer; I do not think that it is the only anſwer which the objection is capable of receiving. The two following cautions, founded, I apprehend, in the moſt reaſonable diſtinctions, will exclude all uncertainty upon this head, which can be attended with danger.

Firſt, to ſeparate what was the object of the apoſtolic miſſion, and declared by them to be ſo, from what was extraneous to it, or only incidentally connected with it. Of points clearly extraneous to the religion, nothing need be ſaid. Of points incidentally connected with it, ſomething may be added: Demoniaca Ipoſſeſſion is one of theſe points: concerning the reality of which, as this place will not admit the examination, or even the production of the arguments, on either ſide of the queſtion, it would be arrogance in me to deliver any judgment. And it is unneceſſary. For what I am concerned to obſerve is, that even they, who think that it was a general, but erroneous opinion, of thoſe times; and that the writers of the New Teſtament, in common with other Jewiſh writers of that age, fell into the manner of ſpeaking and of thinking upon the ſubject, which then univerſally prevailed; need not be alarmed by the conceſſion, as though they had any thing to fear from it, for the truth of Chriſtianity. The doctrine was not what Chriſt brought into the world. It appears in the Chriſtian records, incidentally and accidentally, as being the ſubſiſting opinion of the age and country in which his miniſtry was exerciſed. It was no part of the object of *his* revelation, to regulate men's opinions concerning the action of ſpiritual ſubſtances upon animal bodies. At any rate it is unconnected with teſtimony. If a dumb perſon was by a word reſtored to the uſe of his ſpeech, it ſignifies little to what cauſe the dumbneſs was aſcribed: and the like of every other cure, wrought upon thoſe who are ſaid to have been poſſeſſed. The malady was real, the cure was real, whether the popular explication of the cauſe was well founded or not. The matter of fact, the

change,

change, ſo far as it was an object of ſenſe, or of teſtimony, was in either caſe the ſame.

Secondly, that in reading the apoſtolic writings, we diſtinguiſh between their doctrines, and their arguments. Their doctrines came to them by revelation properly ſo called; yet in propounding theſe doctrines in their writings or diſcourſes, they were wont to illuſtrate, ſupport and enforce them, by ſuch analogies, arguments, and conſiderations, as their own thoughts ſuggeſted. Thus the call of the Gentiles, that is, the admiſſion of the Gentiles to the Chriſtian profeſſion without a previous ſubjection to the law of Moſes, was imparted to the apoſtles by revelation; and was atteſted by the miracles which attended the Chriſtian miniſtry amongſt them. The apoſtles' own aſſurance of the matter reſted upon this foundation. Nevertheleſs, St. Paul, when treating of the ſubject, offers a great variety of topics in its proof and vindication. The doctrine itſelf muſt be received; but is it neceſſary, in order to defend Chriſtianity, to defend the propriety of every compariſon, or the validity of every argument, which the apoſtle has brought into the diſcuſſion? The ſame obſervation applies to ſome other inſtances; and is, in my opinion, very well founded. "When divine writers argue upon any point, we are always bound to believe the concluſions that their reaſonings end in, as parts of divine revelation; but we are not bound to be able to make out, or even to aſſent to, all the promiſes made uſe of by them, in their whole extent, unleſs it appear plainly, that they affirm the premiſes as expreſsly as they do the concluſions proved by them."[a]

[a] Burnet's Expoſ. art. 6.

CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

*The Connexion of Chriſtianity with the Jewiſh Hiſtory.*

UNDOUBTEDLY, our Saviour aſſumes the divine origin of the Moſaic inſtitution: and, independently of his authority, I conceive it to be very difficult to aſſign any other cauſe for the commencement or exiſtence of that inſtitution; eſpecially for the ſingular circumſtance of the Jews adhering to the unity, when every other people ſlid into polytheiſm; for their being men in religion, children in every thing elſe; behind other nations in the arts of peace and war, ſuperior to the moſt improved in their ſentiments and doctrines relating to the Deity.[a] Undoubtedly alſo, our Saviour recogniſes the prophetic character of many of their ancient writers. So far, therefore, we are bound as Chriſtians to go. But to make Chriſtianity anſwerable with its life, for the circumſtantial truth of each ſeparate paſſage of the Old Teſtament, the genuineneſs of every book, the information, fidelity, and judgment of every writer in it, is to bring, I will not ſay great, but unneceſſary difficulties, into the whole ſyſtem. Theſe books were univerſally read and received by the Jews of our Saviour's time. He and his apoſtles, in common with all other Jews, referred to them, alluded to them, uſed them. Yet, except where he expreſsly aſcribes a divine authority to particular predictions, I do not know that we can ſtrictly draw any concluſion from the books being ſo uſed and applied, beſide the proof, which it unqueſtionably is, of their notoriety and reception at that time. In this view our ſcriptures afford a valuable teſtimony to thoſe of the Jews. But the nature of this teſtimony ought to be underſtood. It is ſurely very

[a] "In the doctrine, for example, of the unity, the eternity, the omnipotence, the omniſcience, the omnipreſence, the wiſdom and the goodneſs of God; in their opinions concerning providence, and the creation, preſervation, and government of the world." Campbell on Mir. p. 207.

very different from, what it is ſometimes repreſented to be, a ſpecific ratification of each particular fact and opinion; and not only of each particular fact, but of the motives aſſigned for every action, together with the judgment of praiſe or diſpraiſe beſtowed upon them. St. James, in his epiſtle,[a] ſays, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have ſeen the end of the Lord." Notwithſtanding this text, the reality of Job's hiſtory, and even the exiſtence of ſuch a perſon, has been always deemed a fair ſubject of inquiry and diſcuſſion amongſt Chriſtian divines. St. James's authority is conſidered as good evidence of the exiſtence of the book of Job at that time, and of its reception by the Jews, and of nothing more. St. Paul, in his ſecond epiſtle to Timothy,[b] has this ſimilitude, "Now, as Jannes and Jambres withſtood Moſes, ſo do theſe alſo reſiſt the truth." Theſe names are not found in the Old Teſtament. And it is uncertain, whether St. Paul took them from ſome apocryphal writing then extant, or from tradition. But no one ever imagined, that St. Paul is here aſſerting the authority of the writing, if it was a written account which he quoted, or making himſelf anſwerable for the authenticity of the tradition; much leſs, that he ſo involves himſelf with either of theſe queſtions, as that the credit of his own hiſtory and miſſion ſhould depend upon the fact, whether "Jannes and Jambres withſtood Moſes, or not." For what reaſon a more rigorous interpretation ſhould be put upon other references, it is difficult to know. I do not mean, that other paſſages of the Jewiſh hiſtory ſtand upon no better evidence than the hiſtory of Job, or of Jannes and Jambres, (I think much otherwiſe) but I mean, that a reference in the New Teſtament, to a paſſage in the Old, does not ſo fix its authority, as to exclude all inquiry into its credibility, or into the ſeparate reaſons upon which that credibility is founded; and that it is an unwarrantable, as well as unſafe rule to lay down concerning the Jewiſh hiſtory, what was never laid down concerning any other, that either



[a] v. ii. [b] iii. 8.

ther every particular of it muſt be true, or the whole falſe.

I have thought it neceſſary to ſtate this point explicitly, becauſe a faſhion revived by Voltaire, and purſued by the diſciples of his ſchool, ſeems to have much prevailed of late, of attacking Chriſtianity through the ſides of Judaiſm. Some objections of this claſs are founded in miſconſtruction, ſome in exaggeration; but all proceed upon a ſuppoſition, which has not been made out by argument, that the atteſtation, which the author and firſt teachers of Chriſtianity gave to the divine miſſion of Moſes and the prophets, extends to every point and portion of the Jewiſh hiſtory; and ſo extends, as to make Chriſtianity reſponſible in its own credibility, for the circumſtantial truth, I had almoſt ſaid for the critical exactneſs of every narrative contained in the Old Teſtament.

## CHAP. IV.

### *Rejection of Chriſtianity.*

WE acknowledge that the Chriſtian religion, although it converted great numbers, did not produce an univerſal, or even a general conviction in the minds of men, of the age and countries in which it appeared. And this want of a more complete and extenſive ſucceſs, is called the *rejection* of the Chriſtian hiſtory and miracles; and has been thought by ſome, to form a ſtrong objection to the reality of the facts which the hiſtory contains.

The matter of the objection divides itſelf into two parts, as it relates to the Jews, and as it relates to heathen nations; becauſe the minds of theſe two deſcriptions of men may have been, with reſpect to Chriſtianity, under the influence of very different cauſes. The caſe of the Jews, inaſmuch as our Saviour's miniſtry was originally addreſſed to them, offers itſelf firſt to our conſideration.

Now,

Now, upon the ſubject of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, with *us* there is but one queſtion, viz. whether the miracles were actually wrought? From acknowledging the miracles we paſs inſtantaneouſly to the acknowledgment of the whole. No doubt lies between the premiſes and the concluſion. If we believe the works, or any one of them, we believe in Jeſus. And this order of reaſoning is become ſo univerſal and familiar, that we do not readily apprehend how it could ever have been otherwiſe. Yet it appears to me perfectly certain, that the ſtate of thought, in the mind of a Jew of our Saviour's age, was totally different from this. After allowing the reality of the miracle, he had a great deal to do to perſuade himſelf that Jeſus was the Meſſiah. This is clearly intimated by various paſſages of the goſpel hiſtory. It appears that, in the apprehenſion of the writers of the New Teſtament, the miracles did not irreſiſtibly carry, even thoſe who ſaw them, to the concluſion intended to be drawn from them; or ſo compel aſſent, as to leave no room for ſuſpenſe, for the exerciſe of candour, or the effects of prejudice. And to this point at leaſt, the evangeliſts may be allowed to be good witneſſes; becauſe it is a point, in which exaggeration or diſguiſe would have been the other way. Their accounts, if they could be ſuſpected of falſehood, would rather have magnified, than diminiſhed, the effects of the miracles.

John vii. 21, 31. "Jeſus anſwered, and ſaid unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel—if a man on the Sabbath-day receive circumciſion, that the law of Moſes ſhould not be broken, are ye angry at me, becauſe I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. Then ſaid ſome of them of Jeruſalem, Is not this he whom they ſeek to kill? but lo, he ſpeaketh boldly, and they ſay nothing to him; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Chriſt? *howbeit, we know this man whence he is; but, when Chriſt cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* Then cried Jeſus in the temple as he taught, ſaying,

ſaying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am; and I am not come of myſelf, but he that ſent me is true, whom ye know not; but I know him, for I am from him, and he hath ſent me. Then they ſought to take him, but no man laid hands on him becauſe his hour was not yet come; *and many of the people believed on him, and ſaid, When Chriſt cometh, will he do more miracles than thoſe which this man hath done?*"

This paſſage is very obſervable. It exhibits the reaſoning of different ſorts of perſons upon the occaſion of a miracle, which perſons of all ſorts are repreſented to have acknowledged as real. One ſort of men thought, that there was ſomething very extraordinary in all this; but that ſtill Jeſus could not be the Chriſt, becauſe there was a circumſtance in his appearance, which militated with an opinion concerning Chriſt, in which they had been brought up, and of the truth of which, it is probable, they had never entertained a particle of doubt, viz. that "when Chriſt cometh no man knoweth whence he is." Another ſort were inclined to believe him to be the Meſſiah. But even theſe did not argue as we ſhould; did not conſider the miracle as of itſelf deciſive of the queſtion, as what, if once allowed, excluded all farther debate upon the ſubject, but founded their opinion upon a kind of comparative reaſoning, "when Chriſt cometh, will he do *more* miracles than thoſe which this man hath done?"

Another paſſage in the ſame evangeliſt, and obſervable for the ſame purpoſe, is that in which he relates the reſurrection of Lazarus: "Jeſus," he tells us, (xi. 43, 44) "when he had thus ſpoken, cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth; and he, that was dead, came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bonnd about with a napkin. Jeſus ſaith unto them, Looſe him and let him go." One might have expected, that at leaſt all thoſe who ſtood by the ſepulchre, when Lazarus was raiſed, would have believed in Jeſus. Yet the evangeliſt does not ſo repreſent it. "Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had ſeen the things which Jeſus did,

did, believed on him ; but *ſome of them* went their ways to the Phariſees, and told them what things Jeſus had done." We cannot ſuppoſe that the evangeliſt meant, by this account, to leave his readers to imagine that any of the ſpectators doubted about the truth of the miracle. Far from it. Unqueſtionably he ſtates the miracle to have been fully allowed: yet the perſons who allowed it, were, according to his repreſentation, capable of retaining hoſtile ſentiments towards Jeſus. "Believing in Jeſus" was not only to believe that he wrought miracles, but that he was the Meſſiah. With us there is no difference between theſe two things ; with them there was the greateſt. And the difference is apparent in this tranſaction. If St. John has repreſented the conduct of the Jews upon this occaſion truly, (and why he ſhould not I cannot tell, for it rather makes againſt him than for him) it ſhews clearly the principles upon which their judgment proceeded. Whether he has related the matter truly or not, the relation itſelf diſcovers the writer's own opinion of thoſe principles, and that alone poſſeſſes conſiderable authority. In the next chapter, we have a reflection of the evangeliſt, entirely ſuited to this ſtate of the caſe ; "but though he had done ſo many miracles before them, yet believed they not on him."[a] The evangeliſt does not mean to impute the defect of their belief to any doubt about the miracles, but to their not perceiving, what all now ſufficiently perceive, and what they would have perceived had not their underſtandings been governed by ſtrong prejudices, the infallible atteſtation, which the works of Jeſus bore, to the truth of his pretenſions.

The ninth chapter of St. John's goſpel contains a very circumſtantial account of the cure of a blind man ; a miracle ſubmitted to all the ſcrutiny and examination which a ſceptic could propoſe. If a modern unbeliever had drawn up the interrogatories, they could hardly have been more critical or ſearching. The account contains alſo a very curious conference between the Jewiſh rulers and the patient,



[a] xii. 37.

tient, in which the point for our preſent notice, is their reſiſtance of the force of the miracle, and of the concluſion to which it led, after they had failed in diſcrediting its evidence. "We know that God ſpake unto Moſes, but as for this fellow we know not whence he is." That was the anſwer which ſet their minds at reſt. And by the help of much prejudice, and great unwillingneſs to yield, it might do ſo. In the mind of the poor man reſtored to ſight, which was under no ſuch bias, felt no ſuch reluctance, the miracle had its natural operation. "Herein," ſays he, "is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not ſinners; but if any man be a worſhipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God he could do nothing." We do not find, that the Jewiſh rulers had any other reply to make to this defence, than that which authority is ſometimes apt to make to argument, "Doſt thou teach us?"

If it ſhall be inquired how a return of thought, ſo different from what prevails at preſent, ſhould obtain currency with the ancient Jews, the anſwer is found in two opinions, which are proved to have ſubſiſted in that age and country. The one was, their expectation of a Meſſiah, of a kind totally contrary to what the appearance of Jeſus beſpoke him to be: the other, their perſuaſion of the agency of demons in the production of ſupernatural effects. Theſe opinions are not *ſuppoſed* by us for the purpoſe of argument, but are evidently recognized in the Jewiſh writings, as well as in ours. And it ought moreover to be conſidered, that in theſe opinions the Jews of that age had been from their infancy brought up; that they were opinions the grounds of which they had probably few of them inquired into, and of the truth of which they entertained no doubt. And I think that theſe two opinions conjointly afford an explanation of their conduct. The firſt put them upon ſeeking out ſome excuſe to themſelves, for not receiving

receiving Jeſus in the character in which he claimed to be received; and the ſecond ſupplied them with juſt ſuch an excuſe as they wanted. Let Jeſus work what miracles he would, ſtill the anſwer was in readineſs, "that he wrought them by the aſſiſtance of Beelzebub." And to this anſwer no reply could be made, but that which our Saviour did make, by ſhowing that the tendency of his miſſion was ſo adverſe to the views with which this being was, by the objectors themſelves, ſuppoſed to act, that it could not reaſonably be ſuppoſed that he would aſſiſt in carrying it on. The power diſplayed in the miracles did not alone refute the Jewiſh ſolution, becauſe, the interpoſition of inviſible agents being once admitted, it is impoſſible to aſcertain the limits by which their efficiency is circumſcribed. We of this day may be diſpoſed, poſſibly, to think ſuch opinions too abſurd, to have been ever ſeriouſly entertained. I am not bound to contend for the credibility of the opinions. They were at leaſt as reaſonable as the belief in witchcraft. They were opinions in which the Jews of that age had from their infancy been inſtructed: and thoſe who cannot ſee enough in the force of this reaſon, to account for their conduct towards our Saviour, do not ſufficiently conſider how ſuch opinions may ſometimes become very general in a country, and with what pertinacity, when once become ſo, they are, for that reaſon alone, adhered to. In the ſuſpenſe which theſe notions, and the prejudices reſulting from them, might occaſion, the candid and docile and humble-minded would probably decide in Chriſt's favour; the proud and obſtinate, together with the giddy and the thoughtleſs, almoſt univerſally againſt him.

This ſtate of opinion diſcovers to us alſo the reaſon of what ſome chooſe to wonder at, why the Jews ſhould reject miracles when they ſaw them, yet rely ſo much upon the tradition of them in their own hiſtory. It does not appear, that it had ever entered into the minds of thoſe who lived in the time of Moſes and the prophets, to aſcribe *their* miracles to the ſupernatural agency of evil beings.

ings. The ſolution was not then invented. And the authority of Moſes and the prophets being eſtabliſhed, and become the foundation of the national policy and religion, it was not probable that the later Jews, brought up in a reverence for that religion, and the ſubjects of that policy, ſhould apply to their hiſtory a reaſoning which tended to overthrow the foundation of both.

II. The infidelity of the Gentile world, and that more eſpecially of men of rank and learning in it, is reſolvable into a principle, which, in my judgment, will account for the inefficacy of any argument or any evidence whatever, viz. contempt prior to examination. The ſtate of religion amongſt the Greeks and Romans had a natural tendency to induce this diſpoſition. Dionyſius Halicarneſſenſis remarks, that there were ſix hundred different kinds of religions or ſacred rites exerciſed at Rome.[a] The ſuperior claſſes of the community treated them all as fables. Can we wonder then, that Chriſtianity was included in the number, without inquiry into its ſeparate merits, or the particular grounds of its pretenſions? It might be either true or falſe for any thing they knew about it. The religion had nothing in its character which immediately engaged their notice. It mixed with no politics. It produced no fine writers. It contained no curious ſpeculations. When it did reach their knowledge, I doubt not but that it appeared to them a very ſtrange ſyſtem—ſo unphiloſophical—dealing ſo little in argument and diſcuſſion, however in ſuch arguments and diſcuſſions as they were accuſtomed to entertain. What is ſaid of Jeſus Chriſt, of his nature, office and miniſtry, would be, in the higheſt degree, aliene from the conceptions of their theology. The Redeemer, and the deſtined Judge of the human race, a poor young man executed at Jeruſalem with two thieves upon a croſs! Still more, the language, in which the Chriſtian doctrine was delivered, would be diſſonant and barbarous to their ears. What knew they of grace, of redemption, of juſtification, of the blood of Chriſt ſhed for the ſins of men,

[a] Jortin's Remarks on Eccl. Hiſt. vol. i. p. 371.

men, of reconcilement, of mediation? Chriſtianity was made up of points they had never thought of, of terms which they had never heard.

It was preſented alſo to the imagination of the learned heathen, under additional diſadvantage, by reaſon of its real, and ſtill more of its nominal connexion with Judaiſm. It ſhared in the obloquy and ridicule, with which that people and their religion were treated by the Greeks and Romans. They regarded Jehovah himſelf only as the idol of the Jewiſh nation, and what was related of him, as of a piece with what was told of the tutelar deities of other countries: nay, the Jews were in a particular manner ridiculed for being a credulous race; ſo that whatever reports of a miraculous nature came out of that country, were looked upon by the heathen world as falſe and frivolous. When they heard of Chriſtianity, they heard of it as a quarrel amongſt this people, about ſome articles of their own ſuperſtition. Deſpiſing, therefore, as they did, the whole ſyſtem, it was not probable that they would enter, with any degree of ſerioufneſs or attention, into the detail of its diſputes, or the merits of either ſide. How little they knew, and with what careleſsneſs they judged of theſe matters, appears, I think, pretty plainly from an example of no leſs weight than that of Tacitus, who in a grave and profeſſed diſcourſe upon the hiſtory of the Jews, ſtates that they worſhipped the effigy of an aſs.[a] The paſſage is a proof, how prone the learned men of theſe times were, and upon how little evidence, to heap together ſtories, which might increaſe the contempt and odium in which that people was held. The ſame fooliſh charge is alſo confidently repeated by Plutarch.[b]

It is obſervable, that all theſe conſiderations are of a nature to operate with the greateſt force upon the higheſt ranks; upon men of education, and that order of the public from which *writers* are principally taken. I may add alſo, upon the philoſophical as well as the libertine character; upon the Antonines or Julian, not leſs than upon Nero or Domitian;

[a] Tac. hiſt. l. v. c. 2. [b] Sympoſ. lib. 4. queſ. 5.

Domitian; and, more particularly, upon that large and poliſhed claſs of men, who acquieſced in the general perſuaſion, that all they had to do was to practice the duties of morality, and to worſhip the Deity *more patrio*; a habit of thinking, liberal as it may appear, which ſhuts the door againſt every argument for a new religion. The conſiderations above-mentioned, would acquire alſo ſtrength, from the prejudice which men of rank and learning univerſally entertain againſt any thing that originates with the vulgar and illiterate; which prejudice is known to be as obſtinate as any prejudice whatever.

Yet Chriſtianity was ſtill making its way: and, amidſt ſo many impediments to its progreſs, ſo much difficulty in procuring audience and attention, its actual ſucceſs is more to be wondered at, than that it ſhould not have univerſally conquered ſcorn and indifference, fixed the levity of a voluptuous age, or, through a cloud of adverſe prejudications, opened for itſelf a paſſage to the hearts and underſtandings of the ſcholars of the age.

And the cauſe which is here aſſigned for the rejection of Chriſtianity, by men of rank and learning among the heathens, namely, a ſtrong antecedent contempt, accounts alſo for their *ſilence* concerning it. If they had rejected it upon examination, they would have written about it. They would have given their reaſons. Whereas what men repudiate upon the ſtrength of ſome prefixed perſuaſion, or from a ſettled contempt of the ſubject, of the perſons who propoſe it, or of the manner in which it is propoſed, they do not naturally write books about, or notice much in what they write upon other ſubjects.

The letters of the younger Pliny furniſh an example of this ſilence, and let us, in ſome meaſure, into the cauſe of it. From his celebrated correſpondence with Trajan, we know that the Chriſtian religion prevailed in a very conſiderable degree in the province over which he preſided; that it had excited his attention; that he had inquired into the matter, juſt ſo much as a Roman magiſtrate might be expected to inquire, viz. whether the religion contained any

opinions

opinions dangerous to government; but that of its doctrines, its evidences, or its books, he had not taken the trouble to inform himſelf with any degree of care or correctneſs. But although Pliny had viewed Chriſtianity in a nearer poſition, than moſt of his learned countrymen ſaw it in; yet he had regarded the whole with ſuch negligence and diſdain, (farther than as it ſeemed to concern his adminiſtration) that, in more than two hundred and forty letters of his which have come down to us, the ſubject is never once again mentioned. If out of this number the two letters between him and Trajan had been loſt, with what confidence would the obſcurity of the Chriſtian religion have been argued from Pliny's ſilence about it, and with how little truth?

The name and character, which Tacitus hath given to Chriſtianity, "exitiabilis ſuperſtitio," (a pernicious ſuperſtition) and by which two words he diſpoſes of the whole queſtion of the merits or demerits of the religion, afford a ſtrong proof how little he knew, or concerned himſelf to know, about the matter. I apprehend that I ſhall not be contradicted, when I take upon me to aſſert, that no unbeliever of the preſent age would apply this epithet to the Chriſtianity of the New Teſtament, or not allow that it was entirely unmerited. Read the inſtructions given, by a great teacher of the religion, to thoſe very Roman converts, of whom Tacitus ſpeaks; and given alſo a very few years before the time of which he is ſpeaking; and which are not, let it be obſerved, a collection of fine ſayings, brought together from different parts of a large work, but ſtand in one entire paſſage of a public letter, without the intermixture of a ſingle thought, which is frivolous or exceptionable. "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Not ſlothful in buſineſs, fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing inſtant in prayer, diſtributing to the neceſſity of ſaints, given to hoſpitality. Bleſs them which perſecute you; bleſs, and

curſe

curſe not; rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the ſame mind one towards another: mind not high things, but condeſcend to men of low eſtate. Be not wiſe in your own conceits. Recompenſe to no man evil for evil. Provide things honeſt in the ſight of all men. If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourſelves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, ſaith the Lord: therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink; for, in ſo doing, thou ſhalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

"Let every ſoul be ſubject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God; whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God, and they that reſiſt ſhall receive unto themſelves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame, for he is the miniſter of God to thee for good: but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he beareth not the ſword in vain: for he is the miniſter of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake: for, for this cauſe, pay ye tribute alſo, for they are God's miniſters, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; cuſtom, to whom cuſtom; fear, to whom fear; honour, to whom honour.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law: for this, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, thou ſhalt not kill, thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, thou ſhalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. Love worketh

eth no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

"And that, knowing the time, that now is our ſalvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far ſpent, the day is at hand; let us therefore caſt off the works of darkneſs, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honeſtly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying."[a]

Read this, and then think of exitiabilis ſuperſtitio! !—Or if we be not allowed, in contending with heathen authorities, to produce our books againſt theirs, we may at leaſt be permitted to confront theirs with one another. Of this "pernicious ſuperſtition," what could *Pliny* find to blame, when he was led by his office, to inſtitute ſomething like an examination into the conduct and principles of the ſect? He diſcovered nothing, but that they were wont to meet together on a ſtated day before it was light, and ſing among themſelves a hymn to Chriſt as a god, and to bind themſelves by an oath, not to the commiſſion of any wickedneſs, but not to be guilty of theft, robbery, or adultery; never to falſify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them, when called upon to return it.

Upon the words of Tacitus we may build the following obſervations:

Firſt, That we are well warranted in calling the view, under which the learned men of that age beheld Chriſtianity, an obſcure and diſtant view. Had Tacitus known more of Chriſtianity, of its precepts, duties, conſtitution, or deſign, however he had diſcredited the ſtory, he would have reſpected the principle. He would have deſcribed the religion differently, though he had rejected it. It has been very ſatisfactorily ſhown, that the "ſuperſtition" of the Chriſtians conſiſted in worſhipping a perſon unknown to the Roman calendar; and that the perniciouſneſs with which they were reproached, was nothing elſe but their oppoſition to the eſtabliſhed polytheiſm: and this view of the



[a] Rom. xii. 9. xiii. 13.

matter, was juſt ſuch a one as might be expected to occur to a mind, which held the ſect in too much contempt to concern itſelf about the grounds and reaſons of their conduct.

Secondly, We may from hence remark, how little reliance can be placed upon the moſt acute judgments, in ſubjects which they are pleaſed to deſpiſe; and which, of courſe, they from the firſt conſider, as unworthy to be inquired into. Had not Chriſtianity ſurvived to tell its own ſtory, it muſt have gone down to poſterity as a "pernicious ſuperſtition;" and that upon the credit of Tacitus's account, much, I doubt not, ſtrengthened by the name of the writer, and the reputation of his ſagacity.

Thirdly, That this contempt prior to examination, is an intellectual vice, from which the greateſt faculties of mind are not free. I know not, indeed, whether men of the greateſt faculties of mind are not the moſt ſubject to it. Such men feel themſelves ſeated upon an eminence. Looking down from their height upon the follies of mankind, they behold contending tenets waſting their idle ſtrength upon one another, with a common diſdain of the abſurdity of them all. This habit of thought, however comfortable to the mind which entertains it, or however natural to great parts, is extremely dangerous; and more apt than almoſt any other diſpoſition to produce haſty and contemptuous, and, by conſequence, erroneous judgments, both of perſons and opinions.

Fourthly, We need not be ſurpriſed at many writers of that age not mentioning Chriſtianity at all, when they who did mention it appear to have entirely miſconceived its nature and character; and, in conſequence of that miſconception, to have regarded it with negligence and contempt.

To the knowledge of the greateſt part of the learned heathens, the facts of the Chriſtian hiſtory could only come by report. The books, probably, they had never looked into. The ſettled habit of their minds was, and long had been, an indiſcriminate rejection of all reports of the kind. With theſe ſweeping concluſions truth hath no

chance,

chance. It depends upon diſtinction. If they would not inquire, how ſhould they be convinced? It might be founded in truth, though they who made no ſearch might not diſcover it.

"Men of rank and fortune, of wit and abilities, are often found, even in Chriſtian countries, to be ſurpriſingly ignorant of religion, and of every thing that relates to it. Such were many of the heathens. Their thoughts were all fixed upon other things, upon reputation and glory, upon wealth and power, upon luxury and pleaſure, upon buſineſs or learning. They thought, and they had reaſon to think, that the religion of their country was fable and forgery, an heap of inconſiſtent lies, which inclined them to ſuppoſe that other religions were no better. Hence it came to paſs, that when the apoſtles preached the goſpel, and wrought miracles in confirmation of a doctrine every way worthy of God, many Gentiles knew little or nothing of it, and would not take the leaſt pains to inform themſelves about it. This appears plainly from ancient hiſtory."[a]

I think it by no means unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the heathen public, eſpecially that part which is made up of men of rank and education, were divided into two claſſes; thoſe who deſpiſed Chriſtianity beforehand, and thoſe who received it. In correſpondency with which diviſion of character, the writers of that age would alſo be of two claſſes, thoſe who were ſilent about Chriſtianity, and thoſe who were Chriſtians. "A good man, who attended ſufficiently to the Chriſtian affairs, would become a Chriſtian; after which his teſtimony ceaſed to be pagan, and became Chriſtian."[b]

I muſt alſo add, that I think it ſufficiently proved, that the notion of magic was reſorted to by the heathen adverſaries of Chriſtianity, in like manner as that of diabolical agency had before been by the Jews. Juſtin Martyr alleges this as his reaſon for arguing from prophecy rather than from miracles. Origen imputes this evaſion to Celſus;

[a] Jortin's Diſ. on the Chriſ. Rel. p. 66. ed. 4th.
[b] Hartley Obſ. p. 119.

ſus; Jerome to Porphyry; and Lactantius to the heathen in general. The ſeveral paſſages which contain theſe teſtimonies will be produced in the next chapter. It being difficult however to aſcertain in what degree this notion prevailed, eſpecially amongſt the ſuperior ranks of the heathen communities, another, and I think an adequate cauſe, has been aſſigned for their infidelity. It is probable that in many caſes the two cauſes would operate together.

## CHAP. V.

*That the Chriſtian miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Chriſtian writers themſelves, ſo fully or frequently as might have been expected.*

I SHALL conſider this objection, firſt, as it applies to the letters of the apoſtles, preſerved in the New Teſtament; and ſecondly, as it applies to the remaining writings of other early Chriſtians.

The epiſtles of the apoſtles are either hortatory or argumentative. So far as they were occupied in delivering leſſons of duty, rules of public order, admonitions againſt certain prevailing corruptions, againſt vice, or any particular ſpecies of it, or in fortifying and encouraging the conſtancy of the diſciples under the trials to which they were expoſed, there appears to be no place or occaſion for more of theſe references than we actually find.

So far as the epiſtles are argumentative, the nature of the argument which they handle, accounts for the infrequency of theſe alluſions. Theſe epiſtles were not written to prove the truth of Chriſtianity. The ſubject under conſideration was not that which the miracles decided, the reality of our Lord's miſſion; but it was that which the miracles did not decide, the nature of his perſon or power, the deſign of his advent, its effects, and of thoſe effects the value, kind, and extent. Still I maintain, that miraculous evidence

evidence lies at the bottom of the argument. For nothing could be ſo prepoſterous, as for the diſciples of Jeſus to diſpute amongſt themſelves, or with others, concerning his office or character, unleſs they believed that he had ſhown, by ſupernatural proofs, that there was ſomething extraordinary in both. Miraculous evidence, therefore, forming not the texture of theſe arguments, but the ground and ſubſtratum, if it be occaſionally diſcerned, if it be incidentally appealed to, it is exactly ſo much as ought to take place, ſuppoſing the hiſtory to be true.

As a further anſwer to the objection, that the apoſtolic epiſtles do not contain ſo frequent or ſuch direct and circumſtantial recitals of miracles as might be expected, I would add, that the apoſtolic epiſtles reſemble in this reſpect the apoſtolic ſpeeches, which ſpeeches are given by a writer, who diſtinctly records numerous miracles, wrought by theſe apoſtles themſelves, and by the founder of the inſtitution in their preſence; that it is unwarrantable to contend, that the omiſſion, or infrequency, of ſuch recitals in the ſpeeches of the apoſtles, negatives the exiſtence of the miracles, when the ſpeeches are given in immediate conjunction with the hiſtory of thoſe miracles; and that a concluſion which cannot be inferred from the ſpeeches, without contradicting the whole tenor of the book which contains them, cannot be inferred from letters, which, in this reſpect, are ſimilar only to the ſpeeches.

To prove the ſimilitude which we allege, it may be remarked, that although in St. Luke's goſpel, the apoſtle Peter is repreſented to have been preſent at many deciſive miracles wrought by Chriſt; and although the ſecond part of the ſame hiſtory aſcribes other deciſive miracles to Peter himſelf, particularly the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple, (Acts iii. 1)—the death of Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts v. 1)—the cure of Æneas, (Acts ix. 40)—the reſurrection of Dorcas; (Acts ix. 34)—yet out of ſix ſpeeches of Peter, preſerved in the Acts, I know but two, in which reference is made to the miracles wrought by Chriſt, and only one in which he refers to miraculous

powers poſſeſſed by himſelf. In his ſpeech upon the day of Pentecoſt, Peter addreſſes his audience with great ſolemnity thus: "Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words; Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and ſigns, which God did by him in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know,"[a] &c. In his ſpeech upon the converſion of Cornelius, he delivers his teſtimony to the miracles performed by Chriſt in theſe words: "We are witneſſes of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jeruſalem."[b] But in this latter ſpeech no alluſion appears to the miracles wrought by himſelf, notwithſtanding that the miracles above enumerated, all preceded the time in which it was delivered. In his ſpeech upon the election of Matthias,[c] no diſtinct reference is made to any of the miracles of Chriſt's hiſtory, except his reſurrection. The ſame alſo may be obſerved of his ſpeech upon the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple;[d] the ſame in his ſpeech before the Sanhedrim;[e] the ſame in his ſecond apology in the preſence of that aſſembly. Stephen's long ſpeech contains no reference whatever to miracles, though it be expreſsly related of him, in the book which preſerves the ſpeech, and almoſt immediately before the ſpeech, "that he did great wonders and miracles among the people."[f] Again, although miracles be expreſsly attributed to St. Paul in the Acts of the apoſtles, firſt generally, as at Iconium—(Acts xiv. 3)—during the whole tour through the Upper Aſia—(xiv. 27. xv. 12)—at Epheſus;—(xix. 11, 12)—ſecondly, in ſpecific inſtances, as the blindneſs of Elymas at Paphos,[g] the cure of the cripple at Lyſtra,[h] of the Pythoneſs at Philippi,[i] the miraculous liberation from priſon in the ſame city,[k] the reſtoration of Eutychus,[l] the predictions of his ſhipwreck,[m] the viper at Melita,[n] the cure of Publius's father;[o] at all which miracles, except

[a] Acts ii. 22. [b] Ib. x. 39. [c] Acts i. 15.
[d] Acts iii. 12. [e] iv. 9. [f] vi. 8. [g] xiii. 7.
[h] xiv. 8. [i] xvi. 16. [k] xvi. 26. [l] xx. 10.
[m] xxvii. 1. [n] xxviii. 6. [o] xxviii. 8.

cept the two firſt, the hiſtorian himſelf was preſent: notwithſtanding, I ſay, this poſitive aſcription of miracles to St. Paul, yet in the ſpeeches delivered by him, and given as delivered by him, in the ſame book in which the miracles are related, and the miraculous powers aſſerted, the appeals to his own miracles, or indeed to any miracles at all, are rare and incidental. In his ſpeech at Antioch in Piſidia,[a] there is no alluſion, but to the reſurrection. In his diſcourſe at Miletus[b] none to any miracle: none in his ſpeech before Felix;[c] none in his ſpeech before Feſtus;[d] except to Chriſt's reſurrection, and his own converſion.

Agreeably hereunto, in thirteen letters aſcribed to St. Paul, we have inceſſant references to Chriſt's reſurrection, frequent references to his own converſion, three indubitable references to the miracles which he wrought,[e] four other references to the ſame, leſs direct yet highly probable;[f] but more copious or circumſtantial recitals we have not. The conſent, therefore, between St. Paul's ſpeeches and letters, is in this reſpect ſufficiently exact: and the reaſon in both is the ſame; namely, that the miraculous hiſtory was all along preſuppoſed, and that the queſtion, which occupied the ſpeaker's and the writer's thoughts, was this: whether, allowing the hiſtory of Jeſus to be true, he was upon the ſtrength of it to be received as the promiſed Meſſiah; and, if he was, what were the conſequences, what was the object and benefit of his miſſion?

The general obſervation which has been made upon the apoſtolic writings, namely, that the ſubject, of which they treated, did not lead them to any direct recital of the Chriſtian hiſtory, belongs alſo to the writings of the apoſtolic fathers. The epiſtle of Barnabas is, in its ſubject and general compoſition, much like the epiſtle to the Hebrews; an allegorical application of divers paſſages of the Jewiſh hiſtory, of their law and ritual, to thoſe parts of the Chriſtian

[a] xiii. 16. [b] xx. 17. [c] xxiv. 10. [d] xxv. 8.
[e] Gal. iii. 5. Rom. xv. 18, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 12.
[f] 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. Eph. iii. 7. Gal. ii. 8. 1 Theſſ. i. 5.

tian diſpenſation, in which the author perceived a reſemblance. The epiſtle of Clement was written, for the ſole purpoſe of quieting certain diſſenſions that had ariſen amongſt the members of the church of Corinth; and of reviving, in their minds, that temper and ſpirit of which their predeceſſors in the goſpel had left them an example. The work of Hermas is a viſion; quotes neither the Old Teſtament nor the New; and merely falls now and then into the language, and the mode of ſpeech, which the author had read in our goſpels. The epiſtles of Polycarp and Ignatius had, for their principal object, the order and diſcipline of the churches which they addreſſed. Yet, under all theſe circumſtances of diſadvantage, the great points of the Chriſtian hiſtory are fully recognized. This hath been ſhown in its proper place.[a]

There is, however, another claſs of writers, to whom the anſwer above given, viz. the unſuitableneſs of any ſuch appeals or references as the objection demands: to the ſubjects of which the writings treated, does not apply; and that is, the claſs of ancient *apologiſts*, whoſe declared deſign it was, to defend Chriſtianity, and to give the reaſons of their own adherence to it. It is neceſſary, therefore, to inquire how the matter of the objection ſtands in theſe.

The moſt ancient apologiſt, of whoſe works we have the ſmalleſt knowledge, is Quadratus, who lived about ſeventy years after the aſcenſion, and preſented his apology to the emperor Adrian. From a paſſage of this work, preſerved in Euſebius, it appears that the author did directly and formally appeal to the miracles of Chriſt, and in terms as expreſs and confident as we could deſire. The paſſage (which has been once already ſtated) is as follows: "The works of our Saviour were always conſpicuous, for they were real: both they that were healed, and they that were raiſed from the dead, were ſeen, not only when they were healed or raiſed, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilſt he dwelled on this earth, but alſo after his departure, and for a good while after it; inſomuch as that ſome of them

[a] P. 72—74.

them have reached to our times."[a] Nothing can be more rational or satisfactory than this.

Justin Martyr, the next of the Christian apologists whose work is not lost, and who followed Quadratus at the distance of about thirty years, has touched upon passages of Christ's history in so many places, that a tolerably complete account of Christ's life might be collected out of his works. In the following quotation, he asserts the performance of miracles by Christ, in words as strong and positive as the language possesses: "Christ healed those who from their birth were blind, and deaf, and lame; causing, by his word, one to leap, another to hear, and a third to see; and having raised the dead, and caused them to live, he by his works excited attention, and induced the men of that age to know him. Who, however, seeing these things done, said that it was a magical appearance; and dared to call him a magician, and a deceiver of the people."[b]

In his first apology,[c] Justin expressly assigns the reason for his having recourse to the argument from prophecy, rather than alleging the miracles of the Christian history: which reason was, that the persons with whom he contended would ascribe these miracles to magic; "lest any of our opponents should say, what hinders, but that he who is called Christ by us, being a man sprung from men, performed the miracles which we attributed to him by magical art." The suggesting of this reason meets, as I apprehend, the very point of the present objection; more especially when we find Justin followed in it, by other writers of that age. Irenæus, who came about forty years after him, notices the same evasion in the adversaries of Christianity, and replies to it by the same argument; "But, if they shall say, that the Lord performed these things by an illusory appearance, (φαντασιωδως) leading these objectors to the prophecies, we will show from them, that all things were thus predicted concerning him, and

[a] Eus. Hist. l. iv. c. 3.

[b] Just. Dial. p. 258. ed. Thirlby.

[c] Ap. Prim. p. 48. ib.

and ſtrictly came to paſs."[a] Lactantius, who lived a century lower, delivers the ſame ſentiment, upon the ſame occaſion. "He performed miracles—we might have ſuppoſed him to have been a magician, as ye ſay, and as the Jews then ſuppoſed, if all the prophets had not with one ſpirit foretold, that Chriſt would perform theſe very things."[b]

But to return to the Chriſtian apologiſts in their order; Tertullian—"That perſon, whom the Jews had vainly imagined, from the meanneſs of his appearance, to be a mere man, they afterwards, in conſequence of the power he exerted, conſidered as a magician, when he, with one word, ejected devils out of the bodies of men, gave ſight to the blind, cleanſed the leprous, ſtrengthened the nerves of thoſe that had the palſy, and laſtly, with one command, reſtored the dead to life; when he, I ſay, made the very elements obey him, aſſuaged the ſtorms, walked upon the ſeas, demonſtrating himſelf to be the word of God."[c]

Next in the catalogue of profeſſed apologiſts we may place Origen, who, it is well known, publiſhed a formal defence of Chriſtianity, in anſwer to Celſus, a heathen, who had written a diſcourſe againſt it. I know no expreſſions, by which a plainer or more poſitive appeal to the Chriſtian miracles could be made, than the expreſſions uſed by Origen: "Undoubtedly we do think him to be the Chriſt, and the Son of God, becauſe he healed the lame and the blind; and we are the more confirmed in this perſuaſion, by what is written in the prophecies, Then ſhall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf ſhall hear, and the lame men ſhall leap as an hart. But that he alſo raiſed the dead, and that it is not a fiction of thoſe who wrote the goſpels, is evident from hence, that, if it had been a fiction, there would have been many recorded to be raiſed up, and ſuch as had been a long time in their graves. But, it not being a fiction, few have been recorded; for inſtance, the daughter of the ruler of a ſynagogue, of

[a] Ir. l. ii. c. 57. [b] Lact. v. 3.
[c] Tertull. Apolog. p. 20. ed. Priorii Par. 1675.

of whom I do not know why he ſaid, She is not dead but ſleepeth, expreſſing ſomething peculiar to her, not common to all dead perſons; and the only ſon of a widow, on whom he had compaſſion, and raiſed him to life, after he had bid the bearer of the corpſe to ſtop; and the third, Lazarus, who had been buried four days." This is poſitively to aſſert the miracles of Chriſt, and it is alſo to comment upon them, and that with a conſiderable degree of accuracy and candour.

In another paſſage of the ſame author,[a] we meet with the old ſolution of magic, applied to the miracles of Chriſt by the adverſaries of the religion. "Celſus," ſaith Origen, "well knowing what great works may be alleged to have been done by Jeſus, pretends to grant that the things related of him are true; ſuch as healing diſeaſes, raiſing the dead, feeding multitudes with a few loaves, of which large fragments were left." And then Celſus gives, it ſeems, an anſwer to theſe proofs of our Lord's miſſion, which, as Origen underſtood it, reſolved the phenomena into magic; for Origen begins his reply, by obſerving, "You ſee that Celſus, in a manner allows that there is ſuch a thing as magic."[b]

It appears alſo from the teſtimony of St. Jerome, that Porphyry, the moſt learned and able of the heathen writers againſt Chriſtianity, reſorted to the ſame ſolution: "Unleſs," ſays he, ſpeaking to Vigilantius, "according to the manner of the Gentiles, and the profane, of *Porphyry* and Eunomius, you pretend that theſe are the tricks of demons."[c]

This magic, theſe demons, this illuſory appearance, this compariſon with the tricks of jugglers, by which many of that age accounted ſo eaſily for the Chriſtian miracles, and which anſwers the advocates of Chriſtianity, often thought it neceſſary to refute by arguments drawn from other topics, and particularly from prophecy, to which, it ſeems, theſe ſolutions

[a] Or. Con. Celſ. lib. ii. ſec. 48.

[b] Lard. Jewiſh and Heath. Teſt. vol. II. p. 294, ed. quarto.

[c] Jerome Con. Vigil.

ſolutions did not apply, we now perceive to be groſs ſubterfuges. That ſuch reaſons were ever ſeriouſly urged, and ſeriouſly received, is only a proof, what a gloſs and varniſh faſhion can give to any opinion.

It appears, therefore, that the miracles of Chriſt, underſtood, as we underſtand them, in their literal and hiſtorical ſenſe, were poſitively and preciſely aſſerted and appealed to by the apologiſts for Chriſtianity; which anſwers the allegation of the objection.

I am ready, however, to admit, that the ancient Chriſtain advocates did not inſiſt upon the miracles in argument, ſo frequently as I ſhould have done. It was their lot to contend with notions of magical agency, againſt which the mere production of the facts was not ſufficient for the convincing of their adverſaries: I do not know whether they themſelves thought it quite deciſive of the controverſy. But ſince it is proved, I conceive with certainty, that the ſparingneſs with which they appealed to miracles, was owing neither to their ignorance, nor their doubt of the facts, it is, at any rate, an objection, not to the truth of the hiſtory, but to the judgment of its defenders.

## CHAP. VI.

*Want of univerſality in the knowledge and reception of Chriſtianity, and of greater clearneſs in the evidence.*

OF a revelation which came from God, the proof, it has been ſaid, would in all ages be ſo public and manifeſt, that no part of the human ſpecies would remain ignorant of it, no underſtanding could fail of being convinced by it.

The advocates of Chriſtianity do not pretend that the evidence of their religion poſſeſſes theſe qualities. They do not deny, that we can conceive it to be within the compaſs of divine power, to have communicated to the world

world a higher degree of aſſurance, and to have given to his communication a ſtronger and more extenſive influence. For any thing we are able to diſcern, God *could* have ſo formed men, as to have perceived the truths of religion intuitively; or to have carried on a communication with the other world, whilſt they lived in this; or to have ſeen the individuals of the ſpecies, inſtead of dying, paſs to heaven by a ſenſible tranſlation. He could have preſented a ſeparate miracle to each man's ſenſes. He could have eſtabliſhed a ſtanding miracle. He could have cauſed miracles to be wrought in every different age and country. Theſe, and many more methods, which we may imagine, if we once give looſe to our imaginations, are, ſo far as we can judge, all practicable.

The queſtion, therefore, is not, whether Chriſtianity poſſeſſes the higheſt poſſible degree of evidence, but whether the not having more evidence, be a ſufficient reaſon for rejecting that which we have.

Now there appears to be no fairer method of judging, concerning any diſpenſation which is alleged to come from God, when a queſtion is made whether ſuch a diſpenſation could come from God or not, than by comparing it with other things, which are acknowledged to proceed from the ſame council, and to be produced by the ſame agency. If the diſpenſation in queſtion, labour under no other defects than what apparently belong to other diſpenſations, theſe ſeeming defects do not juſtify us, in ſetting aſide the proofs which are offered of its authenticity, if they be otherwiſe entitled to credit.

Throughout that order then of nature, of which God is the author, what we find is a ſyſtem of *beneficence*, but we are ſeldom or ever able to make out, a ſyſtem of *optimiſm*.

I mean, that there are few caſes in which, if we permit ourſelves to range in poſſibilities, we cannot ſuppoſe ſomething more perfect, and more unobjectionable, than what we ſee. The rain which deſcends from heaven is confeſſedly amongſt the contrivances of the Creator, for the ſuſtentation of the animals and vegetables which ſubſiſt

upon the ſurface of the earth. Yet how partially and irregularly is it ſupplied? How much of it falls upon the ſea, where it can be of no uſe; how often is it wanted where it would be of the greateſt? What tracts of continent are rendered deſarts by the ſcarcity of it? Or, not to ſpeak of extreme caſes, how much, ſometimes, do inhabited countries ſuffer by its deficiency or delay?—We could imagine, if to imagine were our buſineſs, the matter to be otherwiſe regulated. We could imagine ſhowers to fall, juſt where and when they would do good; always ſeaſonable, every where ſufficient; ſo diſtributed as not to leave a field upon the face of the globe ſcorched by drought, or even a plant withering for the lack of moiſture. Yet does the difference between the real caſe and the imagined caſe, or the ſeeming inferiority of the one to the other, authoriſe us to ſay, that the preſent diſpoſition of the atmoſphere is not amongſt the productions or the deſigns of the Deity. Does it check the inference which we draw from the confeſſed beneficence of the proviſion? or does it make us ceaſe to admire the contrivance?—The obſervation, which we have exemplified in the ſingle inſtance of the rain of heaven, may be repeated concerning moſt of the phenomena of nature: and the true concluſion to which it leads is this, that to inquire what the Deity might have done, could have done, or, as we even ſometimes preſume to ſpeak, ought to have done, or, in hypothetical caſes, would have done, and to build any propoſitions upon ſuch inquiries againſt evidence of facts, is wholly unwarrantable. It is a mode of reaſoning, which will not do in natural hiſtory, which will not do in natural religion, which cannot therefore be applied with ſafety to revelation. It may have ſome foundation, in certain ſpeculative *a priori* ideas of the divine attributes; but it has none in experience, or in analogy. The general character of the works of nature is, on the one hand, goodneſs both in deſign and effect; and, on the other hand, a liability to difficulty, and to objections, if ſuch objections be allowed, by reaſon of ſeeming incompleteneſs or uncertainty in attaining their end. Chriſtian-

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ity participates of this character. The true ſimilitude between nature and revelation conſiſts in this ; that they each bear ſtrong marks of their original ; that they each alſo bear appearances of irregularity and defect. A ſyſtem of ſtrict optimiſm may nevertheleſs be the real ſyſtem in both caſes. But what I contend is, that the proof is hidden from *us* ; that we ought not to expect to perceive that in revelation, which we hardly perceive in any thing ; that beneficence of which we *can* judge, ought to ſatisfy us, that optimiſm, of which we *cannot* judge, ought not to be ſought after. We can judge of beneficence, becauſe it depends upon effects which we experience, and upon the relation between the means which we ſee acting, and the ends which we ſee produced. We cannot judge of optimiſm, becauſe it neceſſarily implies a compariſon of that which is tried, with that which is not tried ; of conſequences which we ſee, with others which we imagine, and concerning many of which, it is more than probable, we know nothing ; concerning ſome, that we have no notion.

If Chriſtianity be compared with the ſtate and progreſs of natural religion, the argument of the objector will gain nothing by the compariſon. I remember hearing an unbeliever ſay, that if God had given a revelation, he would have written it in the ſkies. Are the truths of natural religion written in the ſkies, or in a language which every one reads ? or is this the caſe with the moſt uſeful arts, or the moſt neceſſary ſciences of human life ? An Otaheitean or an Eſquimaux knows nothing of Chriſtianity ; does he know more of the principles of deiſm or morality ? which, notwithſtanding his ignorance, are neither untrue, nor unimportant, nor uncertain. The exiſtence of the Deity is left to be collected from obſervations, which every man does not make, which every man, perhaps, is not capable of making. Can it be argued, that God does not exiſt, becauſe, if he did, he would let us ſee him, or diſcover himſelf to mankind by proofs, (ſuch as, we may think, the nature of the ſubject merited) which no inadvertency could miſs, no prejudice withſtand ?

If Chriſtianity be regarded as a providential inſtrument for the melioration of mankind, its progreſs and diffuſion reſembles that of other cauſes, by which human life is improved. The diverſity is not greater, nor the advance more ſlow in religion, than we find it to be in learning, liberty, government, laws. The Deity hath never touched the order of nature in vain. The Jewiſh religion produced great and permanent effects: the Chriſtian religion hath done the ſame. It hath diſpoſed the world to amendment. It hath put things in a train. It is by no means improbable, that it may become univerſal; and that the world may continue in that ſtate ſo long, as that the duration of its reign may bear a vaſt proportion to the time of its partial influence.

When we argue concerning Chriſtianity, that it muſt neceſſarily be true, becauſe it is beneficial, we go perhaps too far on one ſide: and we certainly go too far on the other, when we conclude that it muſt be falſe, becauſe it is not ſo efficacious as we could have ſuppoſed. The queſtion of its truth is to be tried upon its proper evidence, without deferring much to this ſort of argument, on either ſide. "The evidence," as biſhop Butler hath rightly obſerved, "depends upon the judgment we form of human conduct, under given circumſtances, of which it may be preſumed that we know ſomething; the objection ſtands upon the ſuppoſed conduct of the Deity, under relations with which we are not acquainted."

What would be the real effect of that overpowering evidence which our adverſaries required in a revelation, it is difficult to foretel; at leaſt we muſt ſpeak of it as of a diſpenſation, of which we have no experience. Some conſequences however would, it is probable, attend this economy, which do not ſeem to befit a revelation that proceeds from God. One is, that irreſiſtible proof would reſtrain the voluntary powers too much; would not anſwer the purpoſe of trial and probation; would call for no exerciſe of candour, ſerioufneſs, humility, inquiry; no ſubmiſſion of paſſions, intereſts and prejudices, to moral evidence and to probable

probable truth ; no habits of reflection ; none of that previous desire to learn, and to obey the will of God, which forms perhaps the test and merit of the virtuous principle, and which induces men to attend, with care and reverence, to every credible intimation of that will, and to resign present advantages and present pleasures to any reasonable expectation of propitiating his favour. "Men's moral probation may be, whether they will take due care to inform themselves by impartial consideration ; and, afterwards, whether they will act as the case requires, upon the evidence which they have. And this, we find, by experience, is often our probation in our temporal capacity."[a]

II. These modes of communication would leave no place for the admission of *internal evidence ;* which ought, perhaps, to bear a considerable part in the proof of every revelation, because it is a species of evidence which applies itself to the knowledge, love, and practice of virtue, and which operates in proportion to the degree of those qualities which it finds in the person whom it addresses. Men of good dispositions, amongst Christians, are greatly affected by the impression which the scriptures themselves make upon their minds. Their conviction is much strengthened by these impressions. And this perhaps was intended to be one effect to be produced by the religion. It is likewise true, to whatever cause we ascribe it ; (for I am not in this work at liberty to introduce the Christian doctrine of grace or assistance, or the Christian promise, "that, if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God"[b]) it is true, I say, that they who sincerely act or sincerely endeavour to act, *according* to what they believe, that is, according to the just result of the probabilities, or, if you please, the possibilities in natural and revealed religion, which they themselves perceive, and according to a rational estimate of consequences, and, above all, according to the just effect of those principles of gratitude and devotion, which even the view of nature generates in

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[a] Butler's Analogy, part II. c. vi. [b] John vii. 17.

a well-ordered mind, ſeldom fail of proceeding farther. This alſo may have been exactly what was deſigned.

Whereas, may it not be ſaid, that irreſiſtible evidence would confound all characters, and all diſpoſitions? would ſubvert rather than promote the true purpoſe of the divine counſels, which is not to produce obedience by a force little ſhort of mechanical conſtraint, (which obedience would be regularity, not virtue, and would hardly perhaps differ from that which inanimate bodies pay to the laws impreſſed upon their nature) but to treat moral agents agreeably to what they are; which is done, when light and motives are of ſuch kinds, and are imparted in ſuch meaſures, that the influence of them depends upon the recipients themſelves? "It is not meet to govern rational free agents in viâ by ſight and ſenſe. It would be no trial or thanks to the moſt ſenſual wretch to forbear ſinning if heaven and hell were open to his ſight. That ſpiritual viſion and fruition is our ſtate in patriâ." (Baxter's Reaſons, p. 357) There may be truth in this thought, though roughly expreſſed. Few things are more improbable than that we (the human ſpecies) ſhould be the higheſt order of beings in the univerſe; that animated nature ſhould aſcend from the loweſt reptile to us, and all at once ſtop there. If there be claſſes above us of rational intelligences, clearer manifeſtations may belong to them. This may be one of the diſtinctions; and it may be one to which we ourſelves hereafter ſhall attain.

III. But thirdly; may it not alſo be aſked, whether the perfect diſplay of a future ſtate of exiſtence, would be compatible with the activity of civil life, and with the ſucceſs of human affairs? I can eaſily conceive that this impreſſion may be overdone; that it may ſo ſeize and fill the thoughts, as to leave no place for the cares and offices of men's ſeveral ſtations, no anxiety for worldly proſperity, or even for a worldly proviſion, and, by conſequence, no ſufficient ſtimulus to ſecular induſtry. Of the firſt Chriſtians we read, "that all that believed were together, and had all things common; and ſold their poſſeſſions and goods,

goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need; and, continuing daily, with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from houſe to houſe, did eat their meat with gladneſs and ſingleneſs of heart."[a] This was extremely natural, and juſt what might be expected, from miraculous evidence coming with full force upon the ſenſes of mankind: but I much doubt, whether, if this ſtate of mind had been univerſal, or long continued, the buſineſs of the world could have gone on. The neceſſary arts of ſocial life would have been little cultivated. The plough and the loom would have ſtood ſtill. Agriculture, manufactures, trade, and navigation, would not, I think, have flouriſhed, if they could have been exerciſed at all. Men would have addicted themſelves to contemplative and aſcetic lives, inſtead of lives of buſineſs and of uſeful induſtry. We obſerve that St. Paul found it neceſſary, frequently to recall his converts to the ordinary labours and domeſtic duties of their condition; and to give them, in his own example, a leſſon of contented application to their worldly employments.

By the manner in which the religion is now propoſed, a great portion of the human ſpecies is enabled, and of theſe, multitudes of every generation are induced to ſeek and to effectuate their ſalvation through the medium of Chriſtianity, without interruption of the proſperity or of the regular courſe of human affairs.

[a] Acts ii. 44—46.

## CHAP. VII.

### *The ſuppoſed Effects of Chriſtianity.*

THAT a religion, which, under every form in which it is taught, holds forth the final reward of virtue, and puniſhment of vice, and propoſes thoſe diſtinctions of virtue and vice, which the wiſeſt and moſt cultivated part of mankind

kind confeſs to be juſt, ſhould not be believed, is very poſſible ; but that, ſo far as it is believed, it ſhould not produce any good, but rather a bad effect upon public happineſs, is a propoſition, which it requires very ſtrong evidence to render credible. Yet many have been found to contend for this paradox, and very confident appeals have been made to hiſtory, and to obſervation, for the truth of it.

In the concluſions, however, which theſe writers draw, from what they call experience, two ſources, I think, of miſtake, may be perceived.

One is, that they look for the influence of religion in the wrong place :

The other, that they charge Chriſtianity with many conſequences, for which it is not reſponſible.

1. The influence of religion is not to be ſought for, in the councils of princes, in the debates or reſolutions of popular aſſemblies, in the conduct of governments towards their ſubjects, or of ſtates and ſovereigns towards one another, of conquerors at the head of their armies, or of parties intriguing for power at home, (topics, which alone almoſt occupy the attention, and fill the pages of hiſtory) but muſt be perceived, if perceived at all, in the ſilent courſe of private and domeſtic life. Nay more ; even *there* its influence may not be very obvious to obſervation. If it check, in ſome degree, perſonal diſſoluteneſs, if it beget a general probity in the tranſaction of buſineſs, if it produce ſoft and humane manners in the maſs of the community, and occaſional exertions of laborious or expenſive benevolence in a few individuals, it is all the effect which can offer itſelf to external notice. The kingdom of heaven is within us. That which is the ſubſtance of the religion, its hopes and conſolations, its intermixture with the thoughts by day and by night, the devotion of the heart, the control of appetite, the ſteady direction of the will to the commands of God, is neceſſarily inviſible. Yet upon theſe depends the virtue, and the happineſs of millions. This cauſe renders the repreſentations of hiſtory, with reſpect to religion, defective and fallacious, in a greater degree

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gree than they are upon any other ſubject. Religion operates moſt upon thoſe of whom hiſtory knows the leaſt; upon fathers and mothers in their families, upon men-ſervants and maid-ſervants, upon the orderly tradeſman, the quiet villager, the manufacturer at his loom, the huſbandman in his fields. Amongſt ſuch its influence collectively may be of ineſtimable value, yet its effects in the mean time little, upon thoſe who figure upon the ſtage of the world. *They* may know nothing of it; they may believe nothing of it; they may be actuated by motives more impetuous than thoſe which religion is able to excite. It cannot, therefore, be thought ſtrange, that this influence ſhould elude the graſp and touch of public hiſtory; for what is public hiſtory, but a regiſter of the ſucceſſes and diſappointments, the vices, the follies, and the quarrels, of thoſe who engage in contentions for power?

I will add, that much of this influence may be felt in times of public diſtreſs, and little of it in times of public wealth and ſecurity. This alſo increaſes the uncertainty of any opinions that we draw from hiſtorical repreſentations. The influence of Chriſtianity is commenſurate with no effects which hiſtory ſtates. We do not pretend, that it has any ſuch neceſſary and irreſiſtible power over the affairs of nations, as to ſurmount the force of other cauſes.

The Chriſtian religion alſo acts upon public uſages and inſtitutions, by an operation which is only ſecondary and indirect. Chriſtianity is not a code of civil law. It can only reach public inſtitutions through private character. Now its influence upon private character may be conſiderable, yet many public uſages and inſtitutions, repugnant to its principles, may remain. To get rid of theſe, the reigning part of the community muſt act, and act together. But it may be long before the perſons, who compoſe this body, be ſufficiently touched with the Chriſtian character, to join in the ſuppreſſion of practices to which they and the public have been reconciled by that which will reconcile the human mind to any thing, habit and intereſt. Nevertheleſs, the effects of Chriſtianity, even in this view,

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have been important. It has mitigated the conduct of war, and the treatment of captives. It has ſoftened the adminiſtration of deſpotic, or of nominally deſpotic governments. It has aboliſhed polygamy. It has reſtrained the licentiouſneſs of divorces. It has put an end to the expoſure of children, and the immolation of ſlaves. It has ſuppreſſed the combats of gladiators,[a] and the impurities of religious rites. It has baniſhed, if not unnatural vices, at leaſt the toleration of them. It has greatly meliorated the condition of the laborious part, that is to ſay, of the maſs of every community, by procuring for them a day of weekly reſt. In all countries, in which it is profeſſed, it has produced numerous eſtabliſhments for the relief of ſickneſs and poverty; and, in ſome, a regular and general proviſion by law. It has triumphed over the ſlavery eſtabliſhed in the Roman empire: it is contending, and, I truſt, will one day prevail, againſt the worſe ſlavery of the Weſt Indies.

A Chriſtian writer,[b] ſo early as in the ſecond century, has teſtified the reſiſtance which Chriſtianity made to wicked and licentious practices, though eſtabliſhed by law and by public uſage. "Neither in Parthia, do the Chriſtians, though Parthians, uſe polygamy; nor in Perſia, though Perſians, do they marry their own daughters; nor, among the Bactri or Galli, do they violate the ſanctity of marriage; nor, whereever they are, do they ſuffer themſelves to be overcome, by ill-conſtituted laws and manners."

Socrates did not deſtroy the idolatry of Athens, or produce the ſlighteſt revolution in the manners of his country.

But the argument to which I recur is, that the benefit of religion being felt chiefly in the obſcurity of private ſtations,

[a] Lipſius affirms, (Sat. B. i. c. 12) that the gladiatorical ſhows ſometimes coſt Europe twenty or thirty thouſand lives in a month; and that not only the men, but even the women of all ranks, were paſſionately fond of theſe ſhows. See Biſhop Porteus's Sermon XIII.

[b] Bardeſanes ap. Euſeb. præp. evang. vi. 10.

ſtations, neceſſarily eſcapes the obſervation of hiſtory. From the firſt general notification of Chriſtianity to the preſent day, there have been in every age many millions whoſe names were never heard of, made better by it, not only in their conduct, but in their diſpoſition; and happier, not ſo much in their external circumſtances, as in that which is *inter præcordia*, in that which alone deſerves the name of happineſs, the tranquillity and conſolation of their thoughts. It has been, ſince its commencement, the author of happineſs and virtue, to millions and millions of the human race. Who is there that would not wiſh his ſon to be a Chriſtian?

Chriſtianity alſo, in every country in which it is profeſſed, hath obtained a ſenſible, although not a complete influence, upon the public judgment of morals. And this is very important. For without the occaſional correction which public opinion receives, by referring to ſome fixed ſtandard of morality, no man can foretel into what extravagancies it might wander. Aſſaſſination might become as honourable as duelling. Unnatural crimes be accounted as venial as fornication. In this way it is poſſible, that many may be kept in order by Chriſtianity, who are not themſelves Chriſtians. They may be guided by the rectitude which it communicates to public opinion. Their conſciences may ſuggeſt their duty truly, and they may aſcribe theſe ſuggeſtions to a moral ſenſe, or to the native capacity of the human intellect, when in fact they are nothing more, than the public opinion reflected from their own minds; an opinion, in a conſiderable degree, modified by the leſſons of Chriſtianity. "Certain it is, and this is a great deal to ſay, that the generality, even of the meaneſt and moſt vulgar and ignorant people, have truer and worthier notions of God, more juſt and right apprehenſions concerning his attributes and perfections, a deeper ſenſe of the difference of good and evil, a greater regard to moral obligations and to the plain and moſt neceſſary duties of life, and a more firm and univerſal expectation of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, than,

than, in any heathen country, any conſiderable number of men were found to have had."[a]

After all, the value of Chriſtianity is not to be appreciated by its *temporal* effects. The object of revelation is to influence human conduct in this life; but what is gained to happineſs by that influence, can only be eſtimated by taking in the whole of human exiſtence. Then, as hath already been obſerved, there may be alſo great conſequences of Chriſtianity, which do not belong to it as a revelation. The effects upon human ſalvation, of the miſſion, of the death, of the preſent, of the future agency of Chriſt, may be univerſal, though the religion be not univerſally known.

Secondly, I aſſert that Chriſtianity is charged with many conſequences, for which it is not reſponſible. I believe that religious motives have had no more to do, in the formation of nine-tenths of the intolerant and perſecuting laws, which in different countries have been eſtabliſhed upon the ſubject of religion, than they have had to do in England with the making of the game laws. Theſe meaſures, although they have the Chriſtian religion for their ſubject, are reſolvable into a principle, which Chriſtianity certainly did not plant, (and which Chriſtianity could not univerſally condemn, becauſe it is not univerſally wrong) which principle is no other than this, that they who are in poſſeſſion of power do what they can to keep it. Chriſtianity is anſwerable for no part of the miſchief which has been brought upon the world by perſecution, except that which has ariſen from *conſcientious* perſecutors. Now theſe perhaps have never been, either numerous, or powerful. Nor is it to Chriſtianity that even *their* miſtake can fairly be imputed. They have been miſled by an error, not properly Chriſtian or religious, but by an error in their moral philoſophy. They purſued the particular, without adverting to the general conſequence. Believing certain articles of faith, or a certain mode of worſhip, to be highly conducive, or perhaps eſſential to ſalvation, they thought

[a] Clark, Ev. Nat. Rev. p. 208. ed. v.

thought themſelves bound to bring all they could, by every means, into them. And this they thought, without conſidering what would be the effect of ſuch a concluſion, when adopted amongſt mankind as a general rule of conduct. Had there been in the New Teſtament, what there are in the Koran, precepts authoriſing coercion in the propagation of the religion, and the uſe of violence towards unbelievers, the caſe would have been different. This diſtinction could not have been taken, or this defence made.

I apologize for no ſpecies nor degree of perſecution, but I think that even the fact has been exaggerated. The ſlave trade deſtroys more in a year, than the inquiſition does in a hundred, or perhaps hath done ſince its foundation.

If it be objected, as I apprehend it will be, that Chriſtianity is chargeable with every miſchief, of which it has been the *occaſion*, though not the motive; I anſwer, that, if the malevolent paſſions be there, the world will never want occaſions. The noxious element will always find a conductor. Any point will produce an exploſion. Did the applauded intercommunity of the Pagan theology preſerve the peace of the Roman world? Did it prevent oppreſſions, proſcriptions, maſſacres, devaſtations? Was it bigotry that carried Alexander into the Eaſt, or brought Cæſar into Gaul? Are the nations of the world, into which Chriſtianity hath not found its way, or from which it hath been baniſhed, free from contentions? Are their contentions leſs ruinous and ſanguinary? Is it owing to Chriſtianity, or to the want of it, that the fineſt regions of the Eaſt, the countries *inter quatuor maria*, the peninſula of Greece, together with a great part of the Mediterranean coaſt, are at this day a deſert; that the banks of the Nile, whoſe conſtantly renewed fertility is not to be impaired by neglect, or deſtroyed by the ravages of war, ſerves only for the ſcene of a ferocious anarchy, or the ſupply of unceaſing hoſtilities. Europe itſelf has known no religious wars for ſome centuries, yet has hardly ever been without war. Are the calamities, which at this day afflict it, to

be imputed to Chriſtianity? Hath Poland fallen by a Chriſtian cruſade? Hath the overthrow in France, of civil order and ſecurity, been effected by the votaries of our religion, or by the foes? Amongſt the awful leſſons, which the crimes and the miſeries of that country afford to mankind, this is one, that, in order to be a perſecutor it is not neceſſary to be a bigot; that in rage and cruelty, in miſchief and deſtruction, fanaticiſm itſelf can be outdone by infidelity.

Finally, if war, as it is now carried on between nations, produce leſs miſery and ruin than formerly, we are indebted perhaps to Chriſtianity for the change, more than to any other cauſe. Viewed therefore even in its relation to this ſubject, it appears to have been of advantage to the world. It hath humaniſed the conduct of wars; it hath ceaſed to excite them.

The differences of opinion, that have in all ages prevailed amongſt Chriſtians, fall very much within the alternative which has been ſtated. If we poſſeſſed the diſpoſition, which Chriſtianity labours, above all other qualities, to inculcate, theſe differences would do little harm. If that diſpoſition be wanting, other cauſes, even were theſe abſent, would continually riſe up, to call forth the malevolent paſſions into action. Differences of opinion, when accompanied with mutual charity, which Chriſtianity forbids them to violate, are for the moſt part innocent, and for ſome purpoſes uſeful. They promote inquiry, diſcuſſion, and knowledge. They help to keep up an attention to religious ſubjects, and a concern about them, which might be apt to die away in the calm and ſilence of univerſal agreement. I do not know that it is in any degree true, that the influence of religion is the greateſt, where there are the feweſt diſſenters.

## CHAP. VIII.

### *The Concluſion.*

IN religion, as in every other ſubject of human reaſoning, much depends upon the *order* in which we diſpoſe our inquiries. A man who takes up a ſyſtem of divinity with a previous opinion that either every part muſt be true, or the whole falſe, approaches the diſcuſſion with great diſadvantage. No other ſyſtem, which is founded upon moral evidence, would bear to be treated in the ſame manner. Nevertheleſs, in a certain degree, we are all introduced to our religious ſtudies under this prejudication; and it cannot be avoided. The weakneſs of the human judgment in the early part of youth, yet its extreme ſuſceptibility of impreſſion, renders it neceſſary to furniſh it with ſome opinions, and with ſome principles or other. Or indeed, without much expreſs care, or much endeavour for this purpoſe, the tendency of the mind of man, to aſſimilate itſelf to the habits of thinking and ſpeaking which prevail around him, produces the ſame effect. That indifferency and ſuſpenſe, that waiting and equilibrium of the judgment, which ſome require in religious matters, and which ſome would wiſh to be aimed at in the conduct of education, are impoſſible to be preſerved. They are not given to the condition of human life.

It is a conſequence of this ſituation that the doctrines of religion come to us before the proofs; and come to us with that mixture of explications and inferences from which no public creed is, or can be, free. And the effect which too frequently follows, from Chriſtianity being preſented to the underſtanding in this form, is, that when any articles which appear as parts of it, contradict the apprehenſion of the perſons to whom it is propoſed, men of raſh and confident tempers, haſtily and indiſcriminately reject the whole. But is this to do juſtice, either to themſelves, or to the religion? The rational way of

treating

treating a ſubject of ſuch acknowledged importance is to attend, in the firſt place, to the general and ſubſtantial truth of its principles, and to that alone. When we once feel a foundation, when we once perceive a ground of credibility in its hiſtory, we ſhall proceed with ſafety to inquire into the interpretation of its records, and into the doctrines which have been deduced from them. Nor will it either endanger our faith, or diminiſh or alter our motives for obedience, if we ſhould diſcover that theſe concluſions are formed with different degrees of probability, and poſſeſs different degrees of importance.

This conduct of the underſtanding, dictated by every rule of right reaſoning, will uphold perſonal Chriſtianity even in thoſe countries in which it is eſtabliſhed under forms the moſt liable to difficulty and objection. It will alſo have the further effect of guarding us againſt the prejudices which are wont to ariſe in our minds to the diſadvantage of religion, from obſerving the numerous controverſies which are carried on amongſt its profeſſors, and likewiſe of inducing a ſpirit of lenity and moderation in our judgment, as well as in our treatment, of thoſe who ſtand, in ſuch controverſies, upon ſides oppoſite to ours. What is clear in Chriſtianity we ſhall find to be ſufficient, and to be infinitely valuable; what is dubious, unneceſſary to be decided, or of very ſubordinate importance; and what is moſt obſcure, will teach us to bear with the opinions which others may have formed upon the ſame ſubject. We ſhall ſay to thoſe, who the moſt widely diſſent from us, what Auguſtine ſaid to the worſt heretics of his age; "Illi in vos ſæviant, qui neſciunt, cum quo labore verum inveniatur, et quam difficile caveantur errores—qui neſciunt, cum quantâ difficultate ſanetur oculus interioris hominis—qui neſciunt, quibus ſuſpiriis et gemitibus fiat, ut ex quantulacunque parte poſſit intelligi Deus."[a]

A judgment, moreover, which is once pretty well ſatisfied of the general truth of the religion, will not only thus diſcriminate in its doctrines, but will poſſeſs ſufficient ſtrength

[a] Aug. Contr. Ep. fund. cap. 2. n. 2, 3.

ſtrength to overcome the reluctance of the imagination to admit articles of faith which are attended with difficulty of apprehenſion, if ſuch articles of faith appear to be truly parts of the revelation. It was to be expected beforehand, that what related to the economy and to the perſons of the inviſible world, which revelation profeſſes to do, and which, if true, it actually does, ſhould contain ſome points remote from our analogies, and from the comprehenſion of a mind which hath acquired all its ideas from ſenſe and from experience.

It hath been my care, in the preceding work, to preſerve the ſeparation between evidences and doctrines as inviolable as I could; to remove from the primary queſtion all conſiderations which have been unneceſſarily joined with it; and to offer a defence of Chriſtianity, which every Chriſtian might read, without ſeeing the tenets in which he had been brought up attacked or decried: and it always afforded a ſatisfaction to my mind to obſerve that this was practicable; that few or none of our many controverſies with one another affect or relate to the proofs of our religion; that the rent never deſcends to the foundation.

The truth of Chriſtianity depends upon its leading facts, and upon them alone. Now of theſe we have evidence which ought to ſatisfy us, at leaſt until it appear that mankind have ever been deceived by the ſame. We have ſome unconteſted and inconteſtible points, to which the hiſtory of the human ſpecies hath nothing ſimilar to offer. A Jewiſh peaſant changed the religion of the world, and that, without force, without power, without ſupport; without one natural ſource or circumſtance of attraction, influence, or ſucceſs. Such a thing hath not happened in any other inſtance. The companions of this perſon, after he himſelf had been put to death for his attempt, aſſerted his ſupernatural character, founded upon his ſupernatural operations; and, in teſtimony of the truth of their aſſertions, i. e. in conſequence of their own belief of that truth, and, in order to communicate the knowledge of it to oth-

ers, voluntarily entered upon lives of toil and hardſhip, and, with a full experience of their danger, committed themſelves to the laſt extremities of perſecution. This hath not a parallel. More particularly, a very few days after this perſon had been publickly executed, and in the very city in which he was buried, theſe his companions declared with one voice that his body was reſtored to life; that they had ſeen him, handled him, eat with him, converſed with him; and, in purſuance of their perſuaſion of the truth of what they told, preached his religion, with this ſtrange fact as the foundation of it, in the face of thoſe who had killed him, who were armed with the power of the country, and neceſſarily and naturally diſpoſed to treat his followers as they had treated himſelf; and having done this upon the ſpot where the event took place, carried the intelligence of it abroad, in deſpite of difficulties and oppoſition, and where the nature of their errand gave them nothing to expect but deriſion, inſult, and outrage. This is without example. Theſe three facts, I think, are certain, and would have been nearly ſo, if the goſpels had never been written. The Chriſtian ſtory, as to theſe points, hath never varied. No other hath been ſet up againſt it. Every letter, every diſcourſe, every controverſy, amongſt the followers of the religion; every book written by them, from the age of its commencement to the preſent time, in every part of the world in which it hath been profeſſed, and with every ſect into which it hath been divided, (and we have letters and diſcourſes written by contemporaries, by witneſſes of the tranſaction, by perſons themſelves bearing a ſhare in it, and other writings following that age in regular ſucceſſion) *concur* in repreſenting theſe facts in this manner. A religion, which now poſſeſſes the greateſt part of the civilized world, unqueſtionably ſprang up at Jeruſalem at this time. Some account muſt be given of its origin, ſome cauſe aſſigned for its riſe. All the accounts of this origin, all the explications of this cauſe, whether taken from the writings of the early followers of the religion, in which, and in which perhaps alone,

alone, it could be expected that they ſhould be diſtinctly unfolded, or from occaſional notices in other writings of that or the adjoining age, either expreſsly allege the facts above ſtated as the means by which the religion was ſet up, or advert to its commencement in a manner which agrees with the ſuppoſition of theſe facts being true, which renders them probable according to the then ſtate of the world, and which teſtifies their operation and effects.

Theſe propoſitions alone lay a foundation for our faith, for they prove the exiſtence of a tranſaction, which cannot even in its moſt *general* parts be accounted for upon any reaſonable ſuppoſition, except that of the truth of the miſſion. But the particulars, the *detail* of the miracles or miraculous pretences (for ſuch there neceſſarily muſt have been) upon which this unexampled tranſaction reſted, and *for* which theſe men acted and ſuffered as they did act and ſuffer, it is undoubtedly of great importance to us to know. We *have* this detail from the fountain head, from the perſons themſelves; in accounts written by eye-wineſſes of the ſcene, by contemporaries and companions of thoſe who were ſo; not in one book, but four, each containing enough for the verification of the religion, all agreeing in the fundamental parts of the hiſtory. We have the authenticity of theſe books eſtabliſhed by more and ſtronger proofs than belong to almoſt any other ancient book whatever, and by proofs which widely diſtinguiſh them from any others claiming a ſimilar authority to theirs. If there were any good reaſon for doubt concerning the names to which theſe books are aſcribed, (which there is not, for they were never aſcribed to any other, and we have evidence not long after their publication of their bearing the names which they now bear) their antiquity, of which there is no queſtion, their reputation and authority amongſt the early diſciples of the religion, of which there is as little, form a valid proof that they muſt, in the main at leaſt, have agreed with what the firſt teachers of the religion delivered.

When

When we open theſe ancient volumes, we diſcover in them marks of truth, whether we conſider each in itſelf, or collate them with one another. The writers certainly knew ſomething of what they were writing about, for they manifeſt an acquaintance with local circumſtances, with the hiſtory and uſages of the times, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, living in that age. In every narrative we perceive ſimplicity and undeſignedneſs; the air and the language of reality. When we compare the different narratives together, we find them ſo varying as to repel all ſuſpicion of confederacy; ſo agreeing under this variety, as to ſhow that the accounts had one real tranſaction for their common foundation: often attributing different actions and diſcourſes to the perſon whoſe hiſtory, or rather memoirs of whoſe hiſtory, they profeſs to relate, yet actions and diſcourſes ſo ſimilar, as very much to beſpeak the ſame character; which is a coincidence, that, in ſuch writers as they were, could only be the conſequence of their writing from fact, and not from imagination.

Theſe four narratives are confined to the hiſtory of the Founder of the religion, and end with *his* miniſtry. Since however it is certain that the affair went on, we cannot help being anxious to know *how* it proceeded. This intelligence hath come down to us in a work purporting to be written by a perſon, himſelf connected with the buſineſs during the firſt ſtages of its progreſs, taking up the ſtory where the former hiſtories had left it, carrying on the narrative, oftentimes with great particularity, and throughout with the appearance of good ſenſe,[a] information and candour; ſtating all along the origin, and the only probable origin, of effects which unqueſtionably were produced, together with the natural conſequences of ſituations which unqueſtionably did exiſt; and *confirmed* in the ſubſtance at leaſt

[a] See Peter's ſpeech upon curing the cripple, (Acts iii. 18) the council of the apoſtles, (xv) Paul's diſcourſe at Athens, (xvii. 22) before Agrippa. (xxvi) I notice theſe paſſages, both as fraught with good ſenſe, and as free from the ſmalleſt tincture of enthuſiaſm.

leaſt of the account, by the ſtrongeſt poſſible acceſſion of teſtimony which a hiſtory can receive, *original letters*, written by the perſon who is the principal ſubject of the hiſtory, written upon the buſineſs to which the hiſtory relates, and during the period, or ſoon after the period, which the hiſtory compriſes. No man can ſay that this altogether is not a body of ſtrong hiſtorical evidence.

When we reflect that ſome of thoſe, from whom the books proceeded, are related to have themſelves wrought miracles, to have been the ſubject of miracles, or of ſupernatural aſſiſtance in propagating the religion, we may perhaps be led to think, that more credit, or a different kind of credit, is due to theſe accounts, than what can be claimed by merely human teſtimony. But this is an argument which cannot be addreſſed to ſceptics or unbelievers. A man muſt be a Chriſtian before he can receive it. The inſpiration of the hiſtorical ſcriptures, the nature, degree, and extent of that inſpiration, are queſtions undoubtedly of ſerious diſcuſſion; but they are queſtions amongſt Chriſtians themſelves, and not between them and others. The doctrine itſelf is by no means neceſſary to the belief of Chriſtianity, which muſt, in the firſt inſtance at leaſt, depend upon the ordinary maxims of hiſtorical credibility.[a]

In viewing the detail of miracles recorded in theſe books, we find every ſuppoſition negatived, by which they can be reſolved into fraud or deluſion. They were not ſecret, nor momentary, nor tentative, nor ambiguous; nor performed under the ſanction of authority, with the ſpectators on their ſide, or in affirmance of tenets and practices already eſtabliſhed. We find alſo the evidence alleged for them, and which evidence was by great numbers received, different from that upon which other miraculous accounts reſt. It was contemporary, it was publiſhed upon the ſpot, it continued; it involved intereſts and queſtions of the greateſt magnitude; it contradicted the moſt fixed perſuaſions and prejudices of the perſons to whom it was addreſſed; it required from thoſe who accepted it, not a ſimple indolent

[a] See Powell's Diſcourſes. Diſcourſe xv. p. 245.

indolent aſſent, but a change, from thenceforward, of principles and conduct, a ſubmiſſion to conſequences the moſt ſerious and the moſt deterring, to loſs and danger, to inſult, outrage and perſecution. How ſuch a ſtory ſhould be falſe, or, if falſe, how under ſuch circumſtances it ſhould make its way, I think impoſſible to be explained: yet ſuch the Chriſtian ſtory was, ſuch were the circumſtances under which it came forth, and in oppoſition to ſuch difficulties did it prevail.

An event ſo connected with the religion, and with the fortunes of the Jewiſh people, as one of their race, one born amongſt them, eſtabliſhing his authority and his law throughout a great portion of the civilized world, it was perhaps to be expected, ſhould be noticed in the prophetic writings of that nation; eſpecially when this perſon, together with his own miſſion, cauſed alſo to be acknowledged the divine original of their inſtitution, and by thoſe who before had altogether rejected it. Accordingly we perceive in theſe writings, various intimations *concurring* in the perſon and hiſtory of Jeſus, in a manner, and in a degree, in which paſſages taken from theſe books, could not be made to concur, in any perſon arbitrarily aſſumed, or in any perſon, except him, who has been the author of great changes in the affairs and opinions of mankind. Of ſome of theſe predictions the weight depends a good deal upon the concurrence. Others poſſeſs great ſeparate ſtrength: one in particular does this in an eminent degree. It is an entire deſcription, manifeſtly directed to one character and to one ſcene of things: it is extant in a writing, or collection of writings, declaredly prophetic; and it applies to Chriſt's character, and to the circumſtances of his life and death, with conſiderable preciſion, and in a way which no diverſity of interpretation hath, in my opinion, been able to confound. That the advent of Chriſt, and the conſequences of it, ſhould not have been more diſtinctly revealed in the Jewiſh ſacred books, is, I think, in ſome meaſure accounted for by the conſideration, that for the Jews to have foreſeen the fall of their inſtitution, and that it was

to

to merge at length into a more perfect and comprehenſive diſpenſation, would have cooled too much, and relaxed, their zeal for it, and their adherence to it, upon which zeal and adherence, the preſervation in the world of any remains, for many ages, of religious truth, might in a great meaſure depend.

Of what a revelation diſcloſes to mankind, one, and only one queſtion can properly be aſked, "was it of importance to mankind to know, or to be better aſſured of?" In this queſtion, when we turn our thoughts to the great Chriſtian doctrine of the reſurrection of the dead, and of a future judgment, no doubt can poſſibly be entertained. He who gives me riches or honours does nothing; he who even gives me health does little, in compariſon with that, which lays before me juſt grounds for expecting a reſtoration to life, and a day of account and retribution: which thing Chriſtianity hath done for millions.

Other articles of the Chriſtian faith are only the adjuncts and circumſtances of this. They are however ſuch, as appear worthy of the original to which we aſcribe them. The morality of the religion, whether taken from the precepts or the example of its Founder, or from the leſſons of its primitive teachers, derived, as it ſhould ſeem, from what had been inculcated by their Maſter, is, in all its parts, wiſe and pure; neither adapted to vulgar prejudices, nor flattering popular notions, nor excuſing eſtabliſhed practices, but calculated, in the matter of its inſtruction, truly to promote human happineſs, and, in the form in which it was conveyed, to produce impreſſion and effect; a morality, which, let it have proceeded from any perſon whatever, would have been ſatisfactory evidence of his good ſenſe and integrity, of the ſoundneſs of his underſtanding and the probity of his deſigns; a morality, in every view of it, much more perfect, than could have been expected from the natural circumſtances and character of the perſon who delivered it; a morality, in a word, which is, and hath been, moſt beneficial to mankind.

Upon

Upon the greateſt therefore of all poſſible occaſions, and for a purpoſe of ineſtimable value, it pleaſed the Deity to vouchſafe a miraculous atteſtation. Having done this for the inſtitution, when this alone could fix its authority, or give to it a beginning, he committed its future progreſs to the natural means of human communication, and to the influence of thoſe cauſes by which human conduct and human affairs are governed. The ſeed being ſown, was left to vegetate ; the leaven being inſerted, was left to ferment ; and both according to the laws of nature : laws, nevertheleſs, diſpoſed and controlled by that Providence which conducts the affairs of the univerſe, though by an influence inſcrutable, and generally undiſtinguiſhable by us. And in this Chriſtianity is analogous to moſt other proviſions for happineſs. The proviſion is made ; and being made, is left to act according to laws, which, forming part of a more general ſyſtem, regulate this particular ſubject, in common with many others.

Let the conſtant recurrence to our obſervation, of contrivance, deſign, and wiſdom in the works of nature, once fix upon our minds the belief of a God, and after that all is eaſy. In the counſels of a being, poſſeſſed of the power and diſpoſition, which the Creator of the univerſe muſt poſſeſs, it is not improbable that there ſhould be a future ſtate; it is not improbable that we ſhould be acquainted with it. A future ſtate rectifies every thing ; becauſe if moral agents be made, in the laſt event, happy or miſerable, according to their conduct in the ſtation and under the circumſtances in which they are placed, it ſeems not very material by the operation of what cauſes, according to what rules, or even, if you pleaſe to call it ſo, by what chance or caprice, theſe ſtations are aſſigned, or theſe circumſtances determined. This hypotheſis, therefore, ſolves all that objection to the divine care and goodneſs, which the promiſcuous diſtribution of good and evil (I do not mean in the doubtful advantages of riches and grandeur, but in the unqueſtionably important diſtinctions of health and ſickneſs, ſtrength and infirmity, bodily eaſe and pain, mental alacrity

and

and depreſſion) is apt on ſo many occaſions to create. This one truth changes the nature of things: gives order to confuſion: makes the moral world of a piece with the natural.

Nevertheleſs, a higher degree of aſſurance, than that to which it is poſſible to advance this, or any argument drawn from the light of nature, was neceſſary, eſpecially to overcome the ſhock, which the imagination and the ſenſes receive, from the effects and the appearances of death; and the obſtruction which from thence ariſes to the expectation of either a continued or a future exiſtence. This difficulty, although of a nature, no doubt, to act very forcibly, will be found, I think, upon reflection to reſide more in our habits of apprehenſion, than in the ſubject; and that the giving way to it, when we have any reaſonable grounds for the contrary, is rather an indulging of the imagination, than any thing elſe. Abſtractedly conſidered, that is, conſidered without relation to the difference, which habit, and merely habit, produces in our faculties and modes of apprehenſion, I do not ſee any thing more in the reſurrection of a dead man, than in the conception of a child; except it be this, that the one comes into his world with a ſyſtem of prior conſciouſneſſes about him, which the other does not: and no perſon will ſay, that he knows enough of either ſubject to perceive, that this circumſtance makes ſuch a difference in the two caſes, that the one ſhould be eaſy, and the other impoſſible; the one natural, the other not ſo. To the firſt man, the ſucceſſion of the ſpecies would be as incomprehenſible as the reſurrection of the dead is to us.

Thought is different from motion, perception from impact: the individuality of a mind is hardly conſiſtent with the diviſibility of an extended ſubſtance; or its volition, that is, its power of originating motion, with the inertneſs which cleaves to every portion of matter, which our obſervation or our experiments can reach. Theſe diſtinctions lead us to an immaterial principle: at leaſt, they do this; they ſo negative the mechanical properties of matter, in the conſtitution of a ſentient, ſtill more of a ration-

al being, that no argument drawn from theſe properties can be of any great weight in oppoſition to other reaſons, when the queſtion reſpects the changes of which ſuch a nature is capable, or the manner in which theſe changes are effected. Whatever thought be, or whatever it depend upon, the regular experience of *ſleep* makes one thing concerning it certain, that it can be completely ſuſpended, and completely reſtored.

If any one find it too great a ſtrain upon his thoughts, to admit the notion of a ſubſtance ſtrictly immaterial, that is, from which extenſion nnd ſolidity are excluded, he can find no difficulty in allowing, that a particle as ſmall as a particle of light, minuter than all conceiveable dimenſions, may juſt as eaſily be the depoſitory, the organ, and the vehicle of conſciouſneſs, as the congeries of animal ſubſtance, which forms a human body, or the human brain; that, being ſo, it may transfer a proper identity to whatever ſhall hereafter be united to it; may be ſafe amidſt the deſtruction of its integuments; may connect the natural with the ſpiritual, the corruptible with the glorified body. If it be ſaid, that the mode and means of all this is imperceptible by our ſenſes, it is only what is true of the moſt important agencies and operations. The great powers of nature are all inviſible. Gravitation, electricity, magnetiſm, though conſtantly preſent, and conſtantly exerting their influence; though within us, near us, and about us; though diffuſed throughout all ſpace, overſpreading the ſurface, or penetrating the contexture of all bodies with which we are acquainted, depend upon ſubſtances and actions, which are totally concealed from our ſenſes. The Supreme Intelligence is ſo himſelf.

But whether theſe, or any other attempts to ſatisfy the imagination, bear any reſemblance to the truth, or whether the imagination, which, as I have ſaid before, is the mere ſlave of habit, *can* be ſatisfied, or not; when a future ſtate, and the revelation of a future ſtate, is not only perfectly conſiſtent with the attributes of the Being who governs the univerſe; but when it is more; when it alone removes

removes the appearances of contrariety, which attend the operations of his will towards creatures capable of merit and demerit, of reward and puniſhment; when a ſtrong body of hiſtorical evidence, confirmed by many internal tokens of truth and authenticity, gives us juſt reaſon to believe that ſuch a revelation hath actually been made; we ought to ſet our minds at reſt with the aſſurance, that, in the reſources of creative wiſdom, expedients cannot be wanted, to carry into effect what the Deity hath purpoſed: that either a new and mighty influence will deſcend upon the human world, to reſuſcitate extinguiſhed conſciouſneſs; or that, amidſt the other wonderful contrivances with which the univerſe abounds, and by ſome of which we ſee animal life, in many inſtances, aſſuming improved forms of exiſtence, acquiring new organs, new perceptions, and new ſources of enjoyment, proviſion is alſo made, though by methods ſecret to us (as all the great proceſſes of nature are) for conducting the objects of God's moral government, through the neceſſary changes of their frame, to thoſe final diſtinctions of happineſs and miſery, which he hath declared to be reſerved for obedience and tranſgreſſion, for virtue and vice, for the uſe and the neglect, the right and the wrong employment of the faculties and opportunities, with which he hath been pleaſed, ſeverally, to entruſt and to try us.

THE END.

In all pursuits, but chiefly in a wife, b
not wealth, but morals, make the happ

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